



Chiropractic for Ear Infections?

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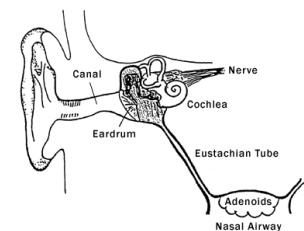


Ear Infections (Otitis Media) are among many common illnesses in children, which chiropractic care has proven to be very effective in treating. Nearly 70% of all children have at least one episode by the age of two. Traditional medical treatments and management of Otitis Media (antibiotic treatment and/or surgery with “tubes”) have been heavily scrutinized through recent research.

Otitis Media has been on a consistent rise for the last 30 years, which many believe to be due to antibiotic resistance. One research study compared that anti-biotic amoxicillin, with a placebo. There was no significant difference of resolution of fluid between the two! Furthermore, the amoxicillin group was 2-6 times more likely to have a recurrence of otitis media than the placebo group! Finally, another medical study on 283 children published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, found no difference in fever, ear pain or further doctor visits between the children treated with antibiotics, and those who took the “wait-and-see” approach.

Research also demonstrates that these tympanostomy tubes are not highly effective. In fact, 75% of all children treated with tubes will experience a recurrence of Otitis Media after 223 days. Additionally, a New England Journal of Medicine study found that tube insertion did not improve developmental outcomes of otitis media. A potential side effect of tubes is scarring of the tympanic membrane (ear drum) which can result in permanent hearing loss. Some studies have shown as much as 51% of all tube surgeries result in some scarring of the ear drum!

Understanding the physiology of the middle ear, and otitis media, may give insight as to why chiropractic treatment may be so effective, while antibiotics might not be. The Eustachian tube, under normal circumstances, uses its drainage opening into the sinuses to clear fluid and to equalize pressure within the middle ear (the “popping” we hear with pressure change, like on an airplane). A very small muscle called the tensor veli palatini, is responsible for the contractions of the Eustachian tube, which allows the tube to clear any fluid buildup.



Vertebral subluxation (spinal misalignment) of the upper cervical spine alters the normal function of a group of nerves called the “superior cervical sympathetic ganglia,” which will affect the nerve directly responsible for tensor veli palatini function. This now prevents the Eustachian tube from being able to open or close itself in order to clear fluid, resulting in occlusion. Occlusion allows for the pooling and congestion of fluid in the middle ear, giving opportunity for otitis media. Removal of subluxations allows for the proper functioning of the neurological structures, thus restoring the normal functioning of the Eustachian tube, and then allowing for proper drainage of the middle ear.