



360 Notre Dame St. Box 89 Belle River ON N0R 1A0  
Phone (519) 728-3366 Fax (519) 728-2646  
info@activelivingchiro.ca www.activelivingchiro.ca

## **Children And Ear Infections**

**By: Dr. Stephen O'Neil**

Dear Dr. Steve: My friend brought her son to see a chiropractor for earaches. How does a chiropractor treat earaches? L.S. Belle River

Dr. Steve: This is a common question received in my office. Likely because so many children are affected by ear infections known as otitis media with effusion (OME). The most common treatment for OME involves antibiotics. Resolution of the infection often requires several courses before one is found to be effective. The infection often returns once antibiotic therapy has ended. Another more invasive form of treatment is called Myringotomy with Tympanostomy Tubes. This is commonly referred to as "getting tubes in the ears". The procedure involves cutting the eardrum and placing small tubes in the ears to allow any fluid or puss to drain and allow air into the ear. The tubes are left and generally fall out in about a year.

Most recent research shows that these treatments are both ineffective and unnecessary in the majority of ear infections. A study in the April 19, 2001 New England Journal of Medicine concludes that for children younger than age three, who have persistent OME, prompt insertion of tubes does not measurably improve developmental outcomes. Otitis media is a spontaneously remitting disease and following the lead of the Netherlands and several other countries, the American Academy of Pediatrics have a new standard of practice regarding OME. These new standards include a "watchful waiting" period for at least three months before any treatment. Antibiotics and corticosteroids are not recommended for routine management of OME. Adenoidectomy (removal of the adenoids), should not be performed unless a specific reason exists to do so. These guidelines apply to children two months to twelve years of age.

Chiropractic on the other hand, takes a much more conservative approach to health. Chiropractic does not treat otitis media directly. Instead, chiropractic works to alleviate pressure on spinal nerves and allow the nervous system to express itself freely. The central nervous system controls and directs all other functions of the body. Therefore, when it is functioning optimally, all other systems will be functioning optimally including the immune system. This makes children more capable of fighting off any existing infections. Maintaining proper nerve flow throughout the body is crucial in optimal function of the body and is necessary for overall wellness. In addition, chiropractors often give a gentle specific tug to the child's ears, which creates a pressure change in the middle ear. This change in pressure in the eustation tube stimulates drainage of fluid the natural way. Children and adults alike with otitis media have responded favorably to chiropractic care.