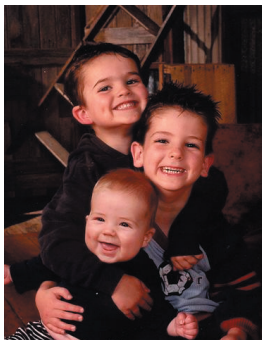


## Ear Infections



**I**f there are children in your household it is almost inevitable they (and the rest of the family) will have suffered from the pain of childhood ear infections. This is an extremely common and painful childhood health problem.

To understand why children suffer from middle ear infections it is important to know a little about how the ear works.

### The Ear

The ear contains a tube called the Eustachian tube, a little duct that connects the middle ear to the back of the throat. The Eustachian tube has two purposes, firstly to provide drainage from the ear and secondly to allow air from the child's breathing to enter the middle ear.

### Why Children Suffer

The principle reason why children suffer more frequently from ear infection than adults is due to the position of the developing Eustachian tube. In a small child the Eustachian tube is more horizontal than in an adult. For this reason it may be difficult for fluid to drain from a child's ear. As the child grows the tube becomes more vertically aligned and drains more easily.

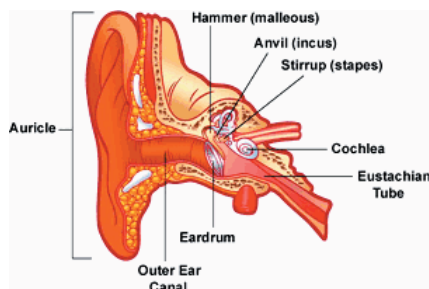
The function of the Eustachian tube is also under the control of various nerves and muscles whose nerve supply is linked to the upper part of the child's neck.

### Common treatments

Antibiotics and intubation are common options offered to alleviate middle ear infection. There is growing evidence that while they may offer short term relief, they do not provide a satisfactory solution.

Repeated clinic research over the past 15-20 years on the use of antibiotics to manage middle ear infections has demonstrated they may not be the best initial approach. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. Up to 40% of childhood ear infections are not bacterial and therefore not treatable with antibiotics.
2. Widespread use of antibiotics may lead to bacterial resistance, rendering the child susceptible to certain bacterial infections that will not respond to antibiotics.
3. Studies have linked an increase in the incidence of allergic type problems to antibiotic use.
4. Benefit is often not as a result of the micro-organisms being destroyed, but simply because the antibiotics provide pain relief.



Another common practice to control ear infections is to insert tubes into the ear drum, a procedure known as tympanic intubation. This procedure provides immediate improvements in the child's hearing. However, clinical trials have shown it to last no longer than 6-9 months.

### Chiropractic

There is rising evidence to suggest that chiropractic adjustment may have a positive effect.

As the Eustachian tube nerves are connected to the neck muscles mechanical problems in the neck can have a marked effect upon the functional capacity of the Eustachian tube. For this reason it is important the spine is correctly aligned to ensure pressure is relieved from the nerve structures related to the Eustachian tube.

While the evidence from clinical trials is not yet definitive, it offers significant promise as an alternative treatment option. Evidence reported by researchers has shown the majority of children with middle ear infection are fully resolved within 10 days, many requiring only 1 or 2 chiropractic treatments. Currently there have been no known cases of side effects associated with this type of chiropractic adjustment.

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