

[IMAGE]

Glue Ear: An All-Too-Common Problem

“Glue ear,” a condition involving the build-up of sticky fluid behind the eardrum, is the primary cause of acquired hearing loss in children. Although hearing usually returns to sufferers, problems in language development can occur: study findings indicate that children with glue ear are more likely than their peers to have behavioral problems and reading difficulties.

Twenty percent of 2-year-olds will suffer from this condition, which is often caused by infections. Afflicted children are sometimes treated with steroids because of evidence from past studies that shows steroids may control symptoms. A recent review in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* examined 10 studies involving steroids to treat glue ear. The authors wanted to weigh the pros and cons of using steroids to treat the condition. They focused on studies of children 12 and under who had suffered a significant hearing loss from glue ear.

The results showed that there was no long-term benefit from either steroids or antibiotics at preventing a hearing loss associated with glue ear. Considering that this condition often clears up without medical treatment, think twice before accepting the use of nasal steroids on your children. To avoid the onset of the condition, don't smoke around your children, and be sure to breast feed (rather than bottle feed) your infant.

Reference: Butler CC, van der Voort JH. Steroids for otitis media with effusion. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, June 2001;155(6), pp. 641-647.

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