

[IMAGE]

## **Lots of Antibiotics, Little Success**

Otitis media refers to inflammation of the middle ear area just behind the eardrum. Two out of three children under the age of three suffer at least one episode of otitis media, and up to one third experience six or more episodes by the time they start school. Common symptoms include irritability, difficulty sleeping and fussiness (in younger children), and ear pain and hearing loss (in older children).

Antibiotics are standard treatment for this condition, despite little scientific evidence supporting their use. A case in point comes from the British Medical Journal, which published a study comparing antibiotic treatment vs. placebo (no treatment) for acute otitis media. Among 53 general practices in the Netherlands, 240 children between six months and two years of age were randomly selected to receive either amoxicillin or placebo. Results showed only slight differences between the two groups with regard to symptom resolution (more common in the antibiotic group at day four, but similar by day 11); duration of fever (shortened by one additional day in the antibiotic group); and crying and/or pain (no differences between the two groups).

The authors conclude that if seven to eight children with acute otitis media are given amoxicillin treatment, only one child will experience symptom improvement by day four. They suggest that the effectiveness of antibiotics for this condition is limited, especially in children under two years of age. Contact your chiropractor for information on nonmedical approaches to resolving otitis media.

### *Reference:*

Damoiseaux RAMJ, van Balen FAM, Hoes AW, et al. Primary-care-based randomized, double-blind trial of amoxicillin versus placebo for acute otitis media in children aged under 2 years. *British Medical Journal*, Feb. 5, 2000: Vol. 320, pp350-54.

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