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Childhood ear infections (*otitis media*) are often very frightening to parents, mostly because they appear suddenly, usually at night, with little warning.

The most common treatments used for ear infections are antibiotics, decongestants, anti-pyretics (fever medication) and tympanostomy (tubes in the ears). You may be surprised that the benefits of all of these are highly questionable.

The Lancet—a major medical research journal—found that recovery time was about the same for children with or without medical intervention. Another study from the *Archives of Otolaryngology* showed that 88 per cent of children with ear infections never needed antibiotics, and antibiotics did not shorten the lifespan of the disease. As a matter of fact, a very recent issue of *Newsweek Magazine* reported that antibiotics are not nearly as effective as the body's own immune system. What a concept!

For parents frustrated with recurring ear infections, the

ear, eye, nose and throat specialist will most likely prescribe the "rite of tympanostomy." According to the late Dr Robert Mendelssohn, a self-proclaimed "medical heretic," tympanostomy is a surgical procedure whereby your child is anaesthetized so that a tube can be placed in his eardrum to drain fluid. Research, however, indicates that this procedure does little to eliminate the problem. It simply reduces pressure and fluid build-up in the ear.

Millions of tympanostomy operations are performed in Canada and the US each year—even though controlled clinical studies have determined that there was "no benefit gained from the placement of tubes." In fact, they actually created complications such as scar formation on the ear drum—leading to hearing loss. Not a desirable side-effect!

As a chiropractor with a fellowship in pediatrics, I see ear infections as a malfunction of the immune system and a result of lowered resistance. In other words, the child's body is not able to fight off or prevent the infection. The main cause of lowered immune resistance in a child is most often the process of delivery during birth. It

can be very traumatic. The stress of the average uncomplicated delivery can cause a vertebral subluxation of the delicate segments of a baby's spine thereby affecting the way a child's nervous system reacts to the world around him.

In their landmark research studies, Drs Gutman and Biedermann examined hundreds of newborn infants and concluded that "an unhealthy spine at birth causes...lowered resistance to infection—especially ear, nose, and throat infection."

My own practice is largely pediatric. Most children I see with ear infections have a vertebral subluxation in their spine that affects the way their nervous

system controls their resistance to infection. By eliminating this subluxation, the child's normal resistance is increased and the threat of ear infection is minimized.

In addition to having chiropractic care, you may want to try the following to help your child:

1. Vitamin C, 1,000–5,000 mg daily
2. Echinacea tincture, 20 drops, two times per day mixed with a few drops

of orange juice for taste. Try for a week and discontinue for one week.

3. Zinc lozenges, but kids often don't enjoy the taste. Use as a last resort.
4. Warmed olive oil drops into the affected ear.

It's not a matter of discovering yet another "wonder antibiotic" to drug your child with, it is a matter of having your child's body function better. n

Ogi Ressel is a chiropractor in Burlington, Ontario. His column appears monthly.

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