

Protecting Our Children

Tackling The Toughest Ear Infections

(NAPSA)—Few things seem as painful for children or frustrating for parents as ear infections. Three out of four children will have at least one ear infection before age three, and of these children, half will experience repeat infections. Certain factors put children at risk for persistent ear infections that are tougher to treat. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children who have recently taken an antibiotic and who are under the age of two or in group child care are at risk for these tougher middle ear infections.

Ear infections can be tough to treat because some bacteria have become more powerful and resistant to antibiotic treatments.

According to the National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP), pediatricians recently surveyed report they are seeing a much higher incidence of tougher, repeat ear infections among their younger patients (ages 0 to 2) in group child care. In addition, 91 percent of the physicians surveyed felt that antibiotic resistance was a factor. According to the doctors surveyed, one-third of their patients in group child care do not respond to the first antibiotic selected for treatment.

Children in group child care (as many as three out of five children in the U.S.) may be at increased risk for tough-to-treat, repeat episodes of illness due to their proximity to other children and to the previous use of ineffective antibiotics.

“Antibiotics should be chosen based on their effectiveness against bacteria, not for their convenience or taste,” said Candice E. Johnson, MD, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and based at the Children’s Hospital in Denver, Co. “If parents talk to their pediatricians about the most effective form of antibiotics, we are taking an important step forward in improving our children’s health by lowering the incidence of repeat ear infections.”

An ongoing educational health campaign by the NACCP is currently focused on the prevention and treatment of middle ear infections because of their high prevalence in children up to age two. A goal of the NACCP cam-



Young children in child care are at increased risk for tough-to-treat ear infections, the kind that keep coming back.

paign is to increase understanding about the appropriate use of antibiotics and the impact of misusing them for viral infections, such as colds or flu, on children’s health—including tough-to-treat ear infections.

According to the NACCP, in most states, licensed child care facilities are mandated to send sick children home, and these children are not allowed to return to group care for at least 24 hours after any fever subsides.

“Often there is an urgency to seek a quick return to wellness through the use of antibiotic therapy,” says Sherry Workman, Executive Director, NACCP. “However, the misuse of antibiotics for illness not caused by bacteria, may actually increase infections. Parents should talk to their pediatricians about proper antibiotic use.”

Middle ear infections are one of the most common childhood illnesses, causing more visits to the doctor than any other ailment—about 30 million each year. As part of their educational campaign, the NACCP is offering parents a free tips sheet called “Ears, Tears and Infections...Oh My! Erase the Ache of Ear Infections.” It explains how to recognize the symptoms of middle ear infections, why they have become tougher-to-treat in recent years and provides valuable information for parents regarding the prevention and treatment of middle ear infections.

For more information on ear infections and child care or to receive the tip sheet, visit the Web site at www.naccp.org or call 1-800-537-1118.