

# Health Alert

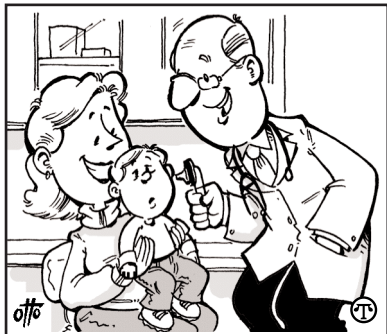
## Ear Infections: The New Major Cause

(NAPSA)—Ear infections affect 16 million children every year. But since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended using a new vaccine as part of children's vaccination schedules, physicians have begun to notice a change in the most common cause of these infections.

The vaccine, known as Prevnar, protects against a bacteria called *streptococcus pneumoniae* (strep pneumo, one of the bacteria that cause ear infections). Researchers have found that while the vaccine is effective in preventing strep pneumo infections, it has actually caused a shift in the primary bacteria responsible for ear infections, to a less common bacteria—*Haemophilus influenzae* (H. flu).

Studies show that this bug is increasingly prevalent in children's ear infections. Before the vaccine, almost half of ear infections were caused by strep pneumo, but by 2002, nearly 60 percent of cases were caused by H. flu. According to a 2002 review of medical records, vaccinated children with ear infections were three times more likely to have the H. flu bug. Considering this shift, physicians may need to change the type of antibiotic they prescribe for ear infections.

To determine the best treatment for a child's ear infection,



the doctor needs to know the specific cause, but this is difficult because a clear diagnosis requires an ear tap, which can be complicated and painful. So, doctors usually prescribe a treatment for the most common cause of the infection. But not all antibiotics are effective against both strep pneumo and H. flu. Older medications, such as penicillins, do not address these bacteria as effectively as newer antibiotics, like cephalosporins, against the most common bacteria.

When doctors prescribe antibiotics to treat ear infections, it is important to consider medications that effectively treat the right bacteria and eliminate the infection. If your child is diagnosed with an ear infection, talk to your doctor about choosing the best antibiotic for your child. For more information about ear infections and treatment options, visit [www.berrygoodears.com](http://www.berrygoodears.com).