

Lifewire: A better treatment for middle ear infections

by Ven Griva

Treating ear infections in children with ear tubes using antibiotic eardrops has been shown again to be more effective than using oral antibiotic treatments, reports a University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center researcher.

A recent study involving 80 children showed that antibiotic eardrops performed better and faster in treating middle ear infections in children with ear tubes than antibiotics in tablet or liquid form. The findings are available online in the journal *Pediatrics*.

"With the use of eardrops, you can put more potent medicine just where you need it," said Dr. Peter Roland, chairman of otolaryngology at UT Southwestern and one of the study's authors.

The study looked at children between the ages of 6 months and 13 years who had ear tubes, middle ear infections and visible drainage in the ear. Both the oral and topical antibiotics cure the infections in more than 70 percent of cases.

However, the topical drops resolved the ear drainage three to five days faster and resulted in more clinical cures overall - 85 percent for those taking drops, compared to 59 percent for oral medication - the study found.

Middle ear infections are the most common diagnosis for which children receive antibiotics, and insertion of ear tubes is the most common surgery performed on children. These infections are often treated with oral antibiotics, which are absorbed through the blood stream, Roland said.

Tubes provide better access to the middle ear, which allows more medicine to reach infections. Topical drops also help avoid potential intestinal and blood absorption that occurs with oral antibiotics.

In addition, because the antibiotic is not distributed throughout the body, there is less chance of developing antibiotic resistance, a growing concern among health officials.

Previous research has shown other advantages to topical antibiotics for middle-ear infections as well:

- They tend to be more tolerable for children, so parents are more likely to comply with the whole regimen.
- They tend to cause fewer gastrointestinal problems, such as diarrhea, gastroenteritis, dermatitis or complications from yeast infections than the oral antibiotics.
- They lead to less antibiotic resistance, a major goal of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention since 1995.

SPEED KILLS

The saying "speed kills" has been around for decades, but recent research highlights one way the much-abused illegal substance does its dirty work.

An article published Dec. 26 in *Neurology*, the scientific journal of the American Academy of Neurology, methamphetamine use can be associated with increased risks of major neck artery tears and stroke.

"It appears methamphetamine use is toxic to large blood vessels," said the study's senior author Dr. Wengui of the University of California Irvine Medical Center.

The article reviewed the cases of two women, ages 36 and 29, who had sudden onset of speech difficulty and weakness following recent use of methamphetamine.

Brain scans showed both women had severe strokes from carotid artery tears in the inner lining of one of the major arteries in the neck, or carotid artery dissection,.

The women suffered strokes, the severity of which were measured using the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale. Any measure over 16 on the scale predicts a high probability of death or severe disability.

The 36-year-old woman received a score of 21 and the 29-year-old woman received a score of 17.

Besides methamphetamine use, the women did not have any other significant risk factors for stroke, the article said. Both women recovered from their strokes with mild to moderate disabilities after acute stroke therapy.

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