

IMPORTANT PATIENT INFORMATION ABOUT



EAR INFECTIONS

This brochure is to help you make the best choice for your child. It gives you up to date information about ear infections.



*Administered by the
Alberta Medical Association*

My child has a runny nose, earache, and cough, is irritable and has a fever (temperature above 38.5°). What do I do?

- ◆ These are the symptoms of an upper respiratory tract infection. Most of these infections are caused by viruses.
- ◆ Take your child's temperature with a thermometer and record it.
 - If it is above 38.5°, try to reduce the fever (see box below).

TIPS TO REDUCE A FEVER

- ◆ Undress your child
- ◆ Give your child a lukewarm bath
- ◆ Provide cool drinks/popsicles
- ◆ Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®, Temptra®) is usually all that is needed to help with pain and fever.

When should I take my child to the doctor?

- ◆ For all children, try the tips in the box above then:
 - If your child is less than 3 months old, take him/her to the doctor that day
 - If your child is older than 3 months but less than 2 years old and is no better after 24 hours, take him/her to the doctor
 - If your child is over 2 years old and is not getting better after 3 days (still has a fever), take him/her to the doctor.

Warning!

If your child seems more drowsy than usual or seems very sick AND you have tried the tips for reducing fever, take your child to the doctor.

Does my child need an antibiotic?

- ◆ Your doctor will do a thorough assessment and examination to decide if a virus is causing the illness. Viral illnesses are not treated with antibiotics and most children get better within 2 to 3 days.
- ◆ If your doctor decides that your child has an ear infection (otitis media) and he/she is not better within 2 to 3 days, an antibiotic may be given.
- ◆ If your child is less than 2 years old, your doctor may choose to treat with antibiotics sooner.

Why aren't antibiotics used for viral infections?

- ◆ Antibiotics do not kill viruses.
- ◆ Antibiotics encourage the growth of more resistant bacteria (superbugs) and may make it more difficult to treat other infections later.

Warning!

- ◆ Antibiotics can cause side effects such as stomach upset and rashes.
- ◆ Antibiotics should only be used by the person for whom they were prescribed. Do **NOT** share.

Tips

- ◆ Wash hands before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing the nose.
- ◆ Wash children's toys frequently to stop the spread of germs.
- ◆ Breast feeding helps to protect babies from getting ear infections.
- ◆ Do not lay your infant down with a bottle.
- ◆ Keep children away from cigarette smoke.
- ◆ Make sure that your child gets plenty of fluids.
- ◆ Never insert Q-tips into your child's ears.
- ◆ Take and record your child's temperature with a thermometer.

Where can I get more information?

- ◆ See your doctor.
- ◆ After reading this brochure, there may be other questions that you wish to ask. It may be helpful to write down any questions you have or points that you would like to discuss with your doctor.

This information guide was prepared by the Antibiotics Working Group of the Alberta Clinical Practice Guidelines Program to assist you with decisions about the treatment of ear infections.

The Antibiotics Working Group is a team made up of family physicians, infectious diseases specialists, paediatricians, microbiologists, community and hospital pharmacists, an epidemiologist, consumers, Alberta Blue Cross and Alberta Health & Wellness representative.

A version of this pamphlet is available on the Alberta Medical Association web site:
<http://www.albertadoctors.org>