

Homeopathic Healthcare by George Guess, MD

Childhood Ear Infections

Homeopathic medicine offers unique advantages in the treatment of childhood ear infections. Now that the appropriateness of antibiotics for these infections has become controversial (one study conducted in England showed no difference in the speed of healing of milder ear infections between patients treated with antibiotics and those untreated), parents are looking for a safer, more effective means of dealing with earache. Even though the bulk of ear infections will heal if left untreated, the pain and discomfort clearly call for a remedy. Also, even though the incidence is small, some ear infections may be plagued by complications; such as, mastoiditis (an infection of the bone behind the ear), meningitis, or brain abscess. Prompt resolution of the infection through the aid of homeopathic remedies can preclude such complications.

Sometimes a child's response to a homeopathic remedy can be profound, with pain and fever subsiding virtually within minutes; in other instances the response is one of slow, steady improvement. I usually recommend that parents who treat their child's ear infection themselves be sure to have the child's ear examined by a medical professional to verify the diagnosis and insure that the appearance of the ear returns to normal. As in all things, common sense should prevail; if your child's ear pain and fever do not seem to be responding to homeopathic treatment, seek the attention of a health professional.

The remedies below are certainly the most common for ear infections, although there are several others. Once you have decided upon a remedy to try, I recommend that it be given in the 30C potency, one dose every 3 to 4 hours until improvement begins; then reduce the frequency to an as needed basis, giving another dose should signs of a relapse appear. How long to wait before expecting improvement varies with the intensity of the suffering. An intense Chamomilla earache would be expected to respond within one to two hours. Less severe earaches might take several hours to one day before a response is apparent.

Homeopathic Remedies

The first three remedies — Belladonna, Pulsatilla, and Chamomilla — are by far the most commonly indicated remedies for children's ear infections. Look first to one of these remedies, especially if the case seems vague and lacks really clear symptoms to suggest another remedy. Give Belladonna if the onset is sudden with fever, Pulsatilla for gradual onset associated with a "ripe cold" (with yellow-green nasal discharge) is a child who is mild and weepy, and Chamomilla if the child is angry and shrieking from pain. More specific indications follow.

Belladonna (deadly nightshade): Sudden in onset, the Belladonna ear infection is typically accompanied by a high fever. The face and/or ear is often flushed bright red. The right ear is usually affected, and the pain is often of a throbbing quality. There may be associated pain in the face. The child is often restless and thirsty. Belladonna is primarily indicated in the early stages of an ear infection.

Chamomilla (chamomille): The child suffering from a Chamomilla ear infection is easily recognizable by his or her emotional reaction to the pain. The pain is felt intensely and renders the child extremely irritable. He will shriek and wail in angry agony, perhaps even strike out at a parent or, if older, be rude. He will be inconsolable and capricious, wanting one thing one minute, something else the next. Despite his irritability, he may well want to be held and carried. However, he will be annoyed by being touched. On occasion one cheek may be red and hot, the other pale and cold. The ear pain is better from warm applications and wrapping up the ear.

Pulsatilla (wind flower): The Pulsatilla child is also readily identified by her emotional response to her ear infection. She (or he) becomes sweet and pitiful, crying gently because of her pain, and

readily responsive to a consoling hug. She can become quite clingy in her need for comfort. The pain in the ear can vary from a dull ache to throbbing. It is usually worse at night. Warmth — of a room, applications, etc. — aggravates the pain, and cold air or application can relieve. The child may thus seem much better when taken outside on a cool day. Usually, despite fever, there is little to no thirst.

Ferrum phosphoricum (iron phosphate): This is the first remedy to think of for the early signs of a developing ear infection. The symptoms are nondescript, lacking the characteristics which would suggest other homeopathic remedies. Fever may be present. Behaviorally the child will seem fairly normal. There may be a circumscribed red flush to the cheeks.

Mercurius (mercury): The symptoms indicating Mercurius are usually those of the child as a whole and not the local symptoms of the earache. The ear pain is usually worse at night. Alternating heat and chills are typical, the child uncovering one minute because he is too hot and covering the next because of a chill. The child may be clammy or sweaty with an offensive odor. The breath may be foul. Most peculiar is the tongue, which is often flabby and coated and indented along the edges, showing the imprint of the teeth.

Hepar sulphuris (calcium sulphide): The Hepar child is irritable and extremely chilly. The ear pains, which are usually of a sharp, stitching quality, will be aggravated by exposure to cold air and drafts, and helped by warmth. The ear is often exquisitely tender to touch. More indicated for mid to late stage infections where pus has formed in the ear, and in association with colds producing a thick, yellow or green nasal discharge.

Aconite (monkshood): Earaches arise suddenly after a chill or exposure to cold or a cold wind. Accompanying the ear pain, which can be intense, is fearfulness and agitation. The ear is red and hot.

Kali muriaticum (potassium chloride): The remedy is most frequently useful at the tail end of an ear infection when there is residual congestion of the ear — serous otitis media. Hearing will be diminished. There is a stuffy or closed sensation in the ear. Crackling noises may be heard by the child when he blows his nose or swallows. There may be a lingering nasal congestion with whitish nasal mucus.

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