

# Therapy for middle ear infections

By: Mark Eisen, MD

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There are several eardrops sold over the counter, excellent for the treatment of middle ear infections (otitis media). Those may contain borage, garlic or mullein oils or other herbal preparations. Two to four warmed drops (hold bottle or glass dropper under running warm water until it reaches baby bottle temp.) are put in the affected ears and a bit of cotton put in. Repeat up to four to six times daily in acute situations. The child's head should be kept warm and covered. For older children a scarf should be worn around the neck. Do not use ear drops if the drum has ruptured (you will see pus draining out, which may be bloodstained. See your doctor immediately if this happens. Not surprisingly, the child's pain almost always stops as soon as the eardrum ruptures — this is because the intense pressure stops as soon as the pus can run out).

## Homeopathic Over The Counter Remedies

In anthroposophical therapy we often try to gently aid the healing effort, but not compel a change. I will typically use homeopathic remedies in the 6X (or 6C) potencies; if these are unavailable or the situation is acute (crying baby, pain in ear) it is A to use 30X or 30C for several doses. If there is no response, contact your health care practitioner. Follow recommendations on the packages or from your practitioner.

A few commonly used remedies for otitis include:

**Chamomilla** — especially useful when a child is fretful, peevish, and irritable. They want water, then throw the bottle down after a sip. The chamomilla child may arch their back and throw their head back, sometimes screaming.

**Pulsatilla** — these children typically have creamy yellowish discharges and they are very "clingy," crying if set down. They are often piteous to look at.

**Aconitum** — especially useful when the onset of the earache is sudden. The pains are knife-like, L>R, and the child is cool to the touch. Their face, however, may be red.

**Belladonna** — useful with high fevers, red and hot, dry faces. The pain is throbbing. R>L. Little thirst. May appear frightened.

**Ferrum, Phos** — use immediately at the initial stages. Often violent, throbbing pain relieved by cold applications. Child anxious, restless and hypersensitive to noise.

**Kali Mur** — associated with white tongue and swollen glands. Often cracking noises on swallowing or blowing nose. R>L.

These are just a few of the many excellent homeopathic remedies available. Books on homeopathic home care will list others.

In addition to over the counter remedies, others are also available *by physician prescription only*. To be a good prescriber of homeopathic remedies requires a lot of patience, training, and experience. Both Weleda and WALA make a wonderful eardrop—an oil extraction of lovage root which can be prescribed by your physician. It is called **Levisticum Oil, 10% Ear Drops**. Follow instructions as above or as directed by the physician.

**Levisticum Radix 3X** is a specific remedy suggestion by Rudolf Steiner and not generally used by homeopaths. I have found it to be a superb preparation for use in uncomplicated ear infections. It is available by prescription only from Weleda or in the preparation called

**Apis/Levisticum D2/3** from WALA (also by prescription). Your physician can prescribe this for you. The child is given one to seven drops (one drop per year of age) of the former, diluted in a teaspoon of water, or two to five pillules of the latter on the tongue, up to hourly while awake. The amount is somewhat age dependent but one or two drops or pillules more or less than recommended should cause no problem.

### Other Therapies

**Chamomile Compresses** can be applied for earache pain. A chamomile tea bag is dipped once into boiled water, removed and placed on a handkerchief, which is then wrung out thoroughly. The warm (watch out it's not too hot) compress is placed over the painful ear and secured in place with a folded dry washcloth and a little stocking cap. Never secure compresses under or around a small child or infant's neck.

**Onion Compresses** may help when the infection is smoldering— when it neither comes out nor is resorbed. A few teaspoons of chopped onions are gently sauteed in olive oil until just glassy in appearance. They are placed in a handkerchief and rolled, then wrapped behind the ear (again, watch the temperature) and secured in place as above. Often the sulfurous element in the onion adds enough warmth to enhance the body's response.

**Lemons on the Feet** will help if the child is excessively congested and uncomfortable; place a wafer thin slice of lemon on the bottoms of the feet; secure carefully with a little gauze, then replace the child's sock back on the foot. This will help reduce congestion quickly. In this case it is the sour, acidic element of the lemon that draws us down more deeply into the body and helps to dry out the head.

In addition to the above measures for acute and chronic conditions, an anthroposophic, homeopathic or naturopathic physician would want to address the often underlying digestive dysfunction which accompanies the child who tends to ear infections, looking for ways to strengthen the breakdown of food substances in the early portion of the digestive tract. This may enhance selectivity of absorption of nutriment, leading to a better feeling for foods, and healthier appetites. It will also enhance elimination and proper bowel functions. I have repeatedly found that attention to digestion is necessary in cases where the ear infections recur more than one or two times after using the above remedies.

All natural drug therapy for conditions such as otitis need to be accompanied by careful observation on the parent's part and re-examination by the practitioner when needed. I find it useful with new parents to have telephone contact with them at least daily during a child's first few illnesses. This creates confidence that they will get the help they need, and keeps me reassured that the parents are clear about instructions and that the child continues to do well. It is essential to work with a qualified health care practitioner when your child is ill, especially those under two years of age with fever. The advice given here is not meant to be used without good observation, common sense and appropriate professional care.

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