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## **Creating a Natural Medicine Cabinet-Ear Infections Liz Cavin ND**

A common ailment we see at Options is the dreaded ear infection. These acute infections are usually painful and can make life miserable for children and their parents. The key in dealing with ear infections is to trust the body's innate ability to heal and provide it needed support during acute illness. There are three types; Outer Ear infections, Middle Ear infections and Inner Ear infections. Since Middle Ear infections are the most common and children get them more often than adults we have decided to focus our attention here. Fever, crying, irritability, clinginess, ear pain or tugging on the ear are common symptoms of Middle Ear infections.

Why are ear infections painful? When a child's immune system responds to an organism or when the body is discharging from the ears, inflammation can result. The inflammation contributes fluid build-up in the eustachian tube and puts pressure on the eardrum. The eardrum distends and pain ensues. Your child's appetite may also decline due to pain with swallowing.

Middle Ear infections, otherwise known as Otitis Media, occur most commonly among infants and toddlers for various reasons. The eustachian tube connects the middle ear cavity to the throat allowing secretions to drain. Infant's eustachian tubes are shorter and less angled allowing fluids to sit in the tube rather than drain. Microbes accumulate in the fluid and infection ensues. As the child grows these tubes get larger and more angled and ear infections decrease in frequency. Young children have lots of lymphoid tissues in their throats. During acute illness of the upper respiratory tract the throat swells blocking the eustachian tubes and thus obstructing drainage.

Food allergies and food sensitivity can cause the body to mount an immune response creating a discharge as the body attempts to return to a state of balance. Fluids build up and middle ear infections often result from this process. Feeding habits and home environments can contribute to the development of middle ear infections. Bottle feeding or allowing a child to take a sippy cup while lying on his or her back causes fluids to flow backward up the eustachian tube this creates an environment for infection to occur. Tobacco smoke and smoke from wood burning stoves can also contribute to middle ear inflammation and fluid build-up in the eustachian tubes.

Antibiotics can contribute to the re-occurrence of Middle Ear infections. They don't provide any relief from pain and don't address viral infections. Antibiotics kill healthy bacteria. Most importantly antibiotics don't support healthy immune function and don't address the various causes of middle ear infections.

Here are some interesting quotes from the Centers for Disease Control website regarding antibiotic use

Parent pressure makes a difference. For pediatric care, a study showed that doctors prescribe antibiotics 62% of the time if they perceive parents expect them and 7% of the time if they feel parents do not expect them.

Antibiotics were prescribed in 68% of acute respiratory tract visits – and of those, 80% were unnecessary according to CDC guidelines.

Each time you or your child takes an antibiotic, the bacteria that normally live in your body (on the skin, in the intestine, in the mouth and nose, etc.) are more likely to become resistant to antibiotics.

Naturopaths use herbal remedies to help address pain, drainage and other symptoms associated with acute Middle Ear infections. Many of these herbs we discussed in Options November article about colds and the flu are effectively used to address ear infections. These familiar herbs are Echinacea, Elderberry, Oregon Grape Root and Garlic. There are a few “new” herbs to add to the list; [Mullein](#), [St John’s Wort](#), [Licorice](#) and Ginger.

[Echinacea](#) has long been used for supporting immune function during acute illnesses. For ear infections it can be used in the form of an extract, tea or capsule. At Options we like to use it as an herbal extract also known as a tincture.

[Elderberry](#) fruit contains flavonoids that help reduce inflammation, which is necessary during the healing process of an ear infection. [Elderberry](#) also contains antiviral constituents. We have several products containing elderberry at Options. First there are two syrup-like products, the pure [Elderberry syrup](#) and the larger [Winterberry](#), which is like our [Fruit Anthocyanins](#) but with extra elderberry added to better address acute illnesses that occur in the winter. [Berry Well](#), another immune formulation chock-full of elderberry (plus other natural anti-virals) is a powder that is easy to administer to children. For those who want a form of elder that doesn't need to be refrigerated and is easily carried in a bag or purse, there is the [Black Elder](#) gemmotherapy.

Garlic has a long history of use as an antimicrobial. In the case of ear infections it is used in the form of botanical oil. [Oil of garlic](#) is combined with [oil of Mullein](#) flowers and [oil of St John’t Wort](#) flowers. Mullein and St. Johns Wort are soothing to inflamed tissues and act as analgesics. Options carries [Mullein Oil Compound](#). The oil should be warmed before 2-3 drops are placed in the ear canal. Test it on your skin first to make sure it is not too warm. Do not use the oil if there is a discharge draining out of the ear canal. If the eardrum has ruptured, nothing should be put directly in the ear. As with colds and the flu garlic can be taken in capsule form. [Allimax](#) is a garlic product manufactured using techniques that preserve the medicinal constituents of garlic when it is put into capsules.

Oregon Grape Root, found in the product [Berberis Formula](#), and [Goldenseal Plus](#) caps contain a substance called berberine. Berberine inhibits the ability of bacteria to attach to human cells and enhances immune cell function.

During an ear infection is useful to consider using a product that contains several botanical ingredients combined because they further boost immune function. Examples of these products are [Viracon](#) and [Herbal Biotic](#). They come in capsule form and can be used by older children and adults. Two more combination products are [Phytoguard Immune](#) tincture and [Immune Support Tincture](#). These tinctures contain herbs that support immune function and act as antimicrobials. They both contain Licorice root which is sweet and thus helps the overall flavor of the tincture. One way to make tinctures more palatable to children is to add them to diluted juice or tea with honey. Honey should only be given to children one year old and older.

### **So which remedies are best for you and your kids? Here is a quick guide.**

Giving young children remedies can be tricky mainly because many of them taste bitter. Consider tinctures made with glycerin or syrups, but avoid remedies with any added carbohydrate in older kids and teens. Berry Well is a powder that is sweetened with Dried Pineapple Powder and Xylitol. Since it can be dissolved in water or juice, it is suitable for children of all ages. Goldenseal and Oregon Grape Root are bitter and best given in capsule form. Allimax, Viracon, Berberis Formula and Herbal Biotic come in capsules too big for children to swallow and are given to teens and adults. Phytoguard Immune tincture and Immune Support Tincture do not contain strong tasting herbs and can be made palatable for children.

Please keep in mind the importance of promoting a healthy biologic environment where organisms can't take hold. Naturopaths refer to this as creating a healthy terrain. Creating a healthy terrain can be accomplished by using probiotic products like [HMF Powder](#) or [HMF Forte](#). They provide the digestive tract with beneficial bacteria which in turn supports healthy development of a child's immune system. Omega 3 fatty acids like [DHA Junior](#) or [DHA Junior Liquid](#) can be given to children to help the body create natural anti-inflammatory substances that help prevent the development of illness.

Remember with ear infections and all acute illnesses the body requires nutritious easy to digest foods like a soup containing lots of cooked vegetables-and no dairy. (Dairy should specifically be avoided in children with recurrent ear infections or in person with respiratory ailments). Eating this way provides needed vitamins and minerals but does not require much energy to digest. Removing sugar from the diet during an ear infection is important because sugar suppresses immune function and can contribute to inflammation. Consuming pop and sweetened drinks or fruit juices put a burden on the body since concentrated forms of sugar are known to lower white blood cells. It is best to drink **water** and decaffeinated **herbal tea** during an ear infection.

You are well on your way to be able to address a variety of acute illnesses. Trust the innate wisdom of the body to heal, respect the body, remember to use time tested hydrotherapy techniques (see our August newsletter) and use common and effective herbal remedies to deal with symptoms. When symptoms of an ear infection arise please give Options a call and we will help determine the best course of action for you or a member of your family. Dr. Liz and Dr. Erin strive to educate patients about steps they can take at home to address acute illness and are willing to answer questions and provide support.

Also remember our [website](#) as a resource with the easily searchable [Health Library](#), [Immune](#) section with other articles on [Boosting Immunity](#), [Hydrotherapy](#), [What to do In Case of Acute Illness](#) and [Fever](#). **Our goal is to provide you with the tools to avoid chronic illness by dealing with acute illness appropriately, i.e. without toxicity and suppression!**

## **Antioxidant, Anti-cancer, Anti-constipation, Anti-heart attack, Anti-doctor Adrenal smoothie** Erin Holston Singh, N.D.

What do you get when you put apple, blueberry, pomegranate, hemp, flax, greens and goji together? You get one heck of a healthy smoothie that tastes delicious! I had a long period where I found myself disinterested in smoothies, having lost interest in manufactured protein powders, soy milk and the usual smoothie fare such as bananas and frozen yogurt. I've been re-recruited, however, with this 100% whole foods concoction I conjured up in recent weeks. Breakfast in minutes, delicious and full of all that we are hearing so much about lately about what is good for you.

Here are the main ingredients:

- 1 small organic gala **apple** (chopped and de-seeded) (anti-doctor)
  - 1/4 cup of frozen **blueberries** (cheaper than fresh at this time of year) (anti-cancer, antioxidant)
  - 1/4 cup frozen **Himalayan goji** berries (check the frozen section at Whole Foods) (adrenal, antioxidant)
  - 2 heaping tablespoons of **Hemp + Fiber Protein** powder (anti-constipation, anti-heart attack)
  - 6 + TBSP. of *ground* organic **flax seed** (anti-cancer, anti-constipation, anti-heart attack)
  - 3 T. of organic **flax seed oil** (anti-cancer, anti-constipation, anti-heart attack)
  - 1 scoop **Greens First** (Immune, bone health, plus!)
  - 1 T. **Fruit Anthocyanins** (anti-cancer, antioxidant, anti-heart attack)
  - 1 cup (or more) **pomegranate** juice (anti-cancer, anti-constipation, anti-heart attack)
- Using a personal sized blender (approx a small, 16 oz. blender) works perfect for a one-person combo.

The berries and the fruit anthocyanins (essentially *flavonoids* from berries) serve as the *fundamentals* in this smoothie, both as fundamental nutrients, but as the fundamental anti-cancer, antioxidant and excellent cardiovascular nutrients. Recent research and consensus amongst naturopathic physicians is beginning to put the importance of these foundational nutrients found in many red and purple fruits as more important than Vitamin C also found in those fruits. They come in greater quantities and serve a wider role in immune and normalization of physiological processes.

Flax seeds contain lignans which serve both an anti-cancer function as well as a an excellent fiber to help those with poor elimination. Flax is also full of good essential fats, a critical and often overlooked need in the diet. Goji berries are known as an adaptogenic herb, which means they have an immune and adrenal boosting effect. These types of herbs are especially good for stamina and also will serve an antioxidant role. Greens, the final ingredient, add a well-rounded nutritional component to this shake. More on greens next month.

## **Discount for Vital Choice Seafoods**

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**Special HOLIDAY DISCOUNT for all PATIENTS SEEN by December 30th!**

**Save by Taking Advantage of Our Holiday Discount**

We are excited to give 15% off **return patient appointment fees** with Dr. Liz *when the appointment occurs by December 30th*. AND **new patients**, never before seen at Options, will receive \$25 off their initial consultation fee with Dr. Liz *also when the appointment occurs by December 30th*.

To take advantage of this offer please mention the discount when you schedule or come in for your appointment.

*Note this discount only applies to visits with Dr. Liz, appointment fees and for appointments seen by year's end.*