Otitis Media With Effusion

Otitis Media with effusion is the presence of fluid in the middle ear. This is a common problem that often follows ear infection. It may be present for weeks or longer after the infection. Unlike an acute ear infection, otits media with effusion refers only to fluid behind the ear drum and not infection. Children with repeated ear and sinus infections and allergy problems are the most likely to get otitis media with effusion.

CAUSES

The most frequent cause of the fluid buildup is dysfunction of the eustacian tubes. These are the tubes that drain the ears.

SYMPTOMS

The main symptom of this condition is hearing loss. As a result children may:

- Listen to the TV at a loud volume.
- Not respond to questions.
- Ask “what” often when spoken to.

DIAGNOSIS

- Your caregiver will diagnose this condition by examining you/your child’s ears.
- Your caregiver may test the pressure in your/your child’s ear with a tympanometer.
- A hearing test may be conducted if the problem persists.
- A caregiver will want to re-evaluate the condition periodically to see if it improves.

TREATMENT

- Treatment depends on the duration and the effects of the effusion.
- Antibiotics, decongestants, nose drops, and cortisone-type drugs may not be helpful.
- Children with persistent ear effusions may have delayed language. Children at risk for developmental delays in hearing, learning and speech may require referral to a specialist earlier than children not at risk.
- You/your child’s caregiver may refer you to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Surgeon for treatment. The following may help restore normal hearing:
  - The drainage of fluid.
  - Placement of ear tubes (*tympanostomy tubes*).
  - Removal of adenoids (*adenoidectomy*).

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Avoid second hand smoke.
- Infants who are breastfed are less likely to have this condition.
- Avoid feeding infants while laying flat.
- Avoid known environmental allergens.

Be sure to see your caregiver or an ear specialist for follow-up of this problem.

Document Released: 01/25/2006 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.