EAR INFECTIONS

1. **Definition:** An ear infection is an infection of the middle ear (the space behind the ear drum). This may occur if the Eustachian tube is blocked. It usually is a complication of a cold. If the following treatment is carried out, there should be no damage to the ear or to the hearing.
2. **Treatment:**
   - **a.** Call our office during office hours to schedule an appointment to evaluate the cause of your child's ear pain.
   - **b.** Antibiotics may be prescribed for the treatment of your child's ear infection to kill germs that may be present. Your child should begin to improve in a few days. However, the antibiotics should always be continued for the full course to kill all of the germs.
   - **c.** If you suspect you child has an ear infection in the evening or at night, try the following measures to relieve pain.
     1. Give an appropriate dose or acetaminophen (Tylenol, etc.) every four hours or Ibuprofen if the child is older than 6 months.
     2. Elevate the head if it is an older child.
     3. Try a heating pad or hot water bottle in an older child.
     4. Put some Auralgan (a prescription), olive oil, or another cooking oil in the aching ear. Warm it up to about body temperature, and put four drops in the ear. **DO NOT** use this treatment if the ear is draining pus.
     5. In an older child, a warm shower may help.

Antibiotics are not prescribed over the telephone and will not provide immediate relief. For this reason, a visit to the ER for ear pain is also usually unnecessary.

   - **d.** Your child may be given an ear re-check appointment. At that visit, your practitioner will look at the eardrum to be certain the ear infection has cleared up. Follow-up appointments are very important, (particularly if your child's eardrum is perforated). Until the eardrum is definitely healed, the ear needs special treatment.
   - **e.** Children who are frequently exposed to cigarette smoke are at increased risk of getting ear infections. Children should not be exposed to cigarette smoke- this includes the house, the car, etc.
3. **Call out office urgently if:**
   - **a.** Earache is not an emergency. If you suspect your child has an ear infection in the evening or at night try the pain relieving methods previously noted and call the office in the morning for an appointment.
   - **b.** In most cases, children should not be taken to the ER for an ear infection.