

Sinus and Ear Infections Getting Harder to Beat

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By Dr. Derek Conte

Every year there seem to be more sinus infections and ear infections, and they appear to be getting more severe, often in combination.

Sinus infections are caused variously by viruses, bacteria, pollen and other irritants, or even a fungus. Ear infections are usually viral or bacterial. While these infections are usually self-limiting, there is a danger of serious cross-infections to the eyes (from the sinuses) and to the brain (from the inner ear), causing possible blindness or encephalitis, respectively.

While there are no direct connections or ducts between the ears and the sinuses, there is a common area of drainage for both, explaining their frequent simultaneity. The sinuses drain into the nasal cavity, the back of which communicates with the nasopharynx (top of the throat). The Eustachian tube drains the middle ear also into the nasopharynx. As a result, a sore throat, too, can be added to the miserable mix. The pain associated with these infections is due to the stretching of sensitive tissues by the swelling caused by the bacterial bloom.

“In the case of inflammation swelling blocks off the Eustachian tubes and the drainage pathways of the sinuses and the trapped fluid itself causes sinus & ear pain and can get infected causing sinusitis and otitis media” (stackexchange.com). It important to open the Eustachian tube and the sinus passages for the infection can drain out!

Medical websites tend to describe the ear infection itself, but don't mention the function and importance of the Eustachian tube which, when properly open, drains the collected infection from the middle ear into the nasopharynx, where the lymph nodes of the throat could easily handle the infection.

Typical medical treatments for both usually include antihistamines, pain relievers or antibiotics, if more severe, but MD's are more hesitant now (and rightly so) to give antibiotics because of their general past overuse. Sometimes, in chronic cases, the medical solution for earaches is to place a small tube in the eardrum to allow for the release of middle ear pressure.

Natural treatment and prevention include cod liver oil, which is full of vitamins A + D are crucial for maintaining the health of mucous membranes that protect linings. Very familiar treatments like gargling with very warm sea salt water or apple cider vinegar will help a sore throat, and inhaling steam from a pot with a single drop of peppermint oil will open up the sinuses. Zinc and vitamins A, C + E are good immune system boosters.

So, what would a chiropractor do to help these problems? First, an exam is performed to evaluate the entire spine, posture and weight distribution. A careful history is taken. Areas of spinal restriction and pain are correlated with patient complaints and other findings. Usually the area of the upper neck will be involved and the patient will also complain of headaches. There is a complex interplay of nerve distribution and function in this “upper cervical” area and can account for all the problems we've discussed. Additionally, specific adjustments to address the sinuses and the Eustachian tubes are done to excellent result. By caring for the entire spine the body is able to heal itself.

Dr. Derek Conte is co-founder of Chiropractic Specialists at 1154 Concord Rd. in Smyrna. For questions, call 404-784-6008. Also visit: drderekconte.com for more articles, info and photos.