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## Sickness Season or Health Season?

### What you need to know about colds, the flu and ear infections

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Each autumn millions of children and adults come down with a cold, the flu or an ear infection. Yet misconceptions often result in inappropriate treatment.

**Colds and Flu:** Both the common cold and influenza are caused by viruses, so medical treatment is rarely necessary. Influenza is like a cold, but may include fever, body aches, chills and extreme fatigue. Stomach flu which causes vomiting is often a case of mild food poisoning.

According to an article in the February 2003 issue of *Pediatrics*, colds accounted for 1.6 million emergency room visits and 25 million ambulatory visits in 1998. In response to the widespread misconception that medical intervention is helpful, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued some common sense advice to parents:

- Avoid antibiotics which have no effect on viruses.
- Don't use over-the-counter cold or cough medications since most will not work.
- Don't use aspirin if a child has a fever since it can cause a serious reaction called Reye's syndrome.

Annual flu vaccines are available, but their benefit is extremely questionable. Vaccine experts must decide which flu varieties will be the biggest threats 9-12 months in advance. Since flu viruses mutate constantly, it is nearly impossible to include the right strains in the vaccine.

**Ear Infections:** Typically affecting young children, ear infections may be caused by viruses or bacteria. The Southern California/RAND Evidence-based Practice

Center analyzed clinical studies conducted from 1964 through 1998, sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. It estimates that over 5 million cases of acute otitis media (AOM) occur each year in the US at a cost of approximately \$3 billion.

The studies showed that without antibiotics, nearly two-thirds of children recover from pain and fever within 24 hours of diagnosis and over 80% recover fully within seven days. In the May 2004 issue of *Pediatrics*, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued new guidelines, recommending observation in many cases instead of antibiotics. Several studies have shown that chiropractic care benefits children with recurrent ear infections, such as the one conducted by Drs. Fallon and Edelman and described in the March 1998 edition of *Alternative Therapies*.

**Remedies and Prevention:** So what should you do when you come down with a cold, the flu or an ear infection? Get plenty of sleep, drink lots of fluids, and eat healthy food. In addition be sure to get adjusted regularly and especially if you are sick. Your nervous system directly controls your immune system, and spinal subluxations can interfere with the communication between the nervous system and the immune system. Chiropractic care will remove this interference so your body can maximize its immune system response and keep itself as healthy as possible.