

## **Caring for Your Child with an Ear Infection:**

### **Watchful Waiting and Safety-Net Antibiotic Prescription**

Ear infections are common in kids.

#### **Your Child's Diagnosis:**

An ear infection is when a child has pus in the middle ear (the space behind the eardrum).

#### **Some Signs of an Ear Infection:**

- Fever
- Ear pain
- Fussy
- Not sleeping much
- Not eating or drinking much
- Throwing up
- Loose stools

#### **How to Treat Ear Infections?**

##### **Treatment Depends On:**

- Your child's age
- If one ear or both ears are infected
- How sick your child is

##### **Does My Child Need Antibiotics?**

- Antibiotics are needed for some, but not all ear infections
- Taking antibiotics too often can make it hard for them to work the next time they are needed
- Antibiotics can have side effects such as throwing up, loose stools and allergic reactions

#### **Some ear infections can be treated with these steps:**

##### **STEP 1: Watchful Waiting**

- Give your child's body time to fight the infection on its own
- Don't give antibiotics for 2-3 days to see if your child improves without them
- Treat the pain and fever
- This is the only step for most children

##### **STEP 2: Add Antibiotic Only as Back-Up**

Giving a safety-net antibiotic prescription to **fill ONLY if your child has:**

- Fever of 102.2°F or greater
- Ear pain that is worse
- Ear draining pus or blood
- Is not better in 2-3 days

**IF** we have agreed to treat your child in 2 steps, follow STEP 1 and STEP 2

#### **Home Care:**

There are ways to help the symptoms even if you don't start antibiotics. Your child can use medicine for pain or fever.

- Use either of these
  - Acetaminophen (Tylenol® and Fever-all®)
  - Ibuprofen (Advil® and Motrin®) if over 6 months of age
- If your child has an ongoing health problem (such as a kidney, liver, or blood problem), check with the health care team before giving these
- Do **NOT** give aspirin to a child or teen

#### **Prevention:**

- Make sure your child is up to date on vaccines (shots)
- Get a flu vaccine every year if indicated
- Wash your hands

- For babies, breastfeed, if possible
- Don't give your child a pacifier after 6 months of age
- Help your child stay away from people with colds
- Don't smoke
- Stay away from secondhand smoke

**Call Your Health Care Team if Your Child...**

- Still has fever after taking the safety-net antibiotic for 2-3 days
- Has blood coming from the ear
- Is not drinking
- Throws up more than a few times in 24 hours
- Seems to be getting sicker

**Go to the ER if Your Child...**

- Looks dehydrated (signs include dry or sticky mouth, sunken eyes, crying with few or no tears, peeing less often, sleepy)
- Has a swollen or red ear
- Has pain or redness over the bone behind the ear
- Has neck pain or seems to have a stiff neck