

HEALTH MATTERS

Big Drop in Kids' Ear Infections

Credit goes to less exposure to cigarette smoke

(AP) -- Ear infections, a scourge that has left countless tots screaming through the night, have fallen dramatically, and some researchers suggest a decline in smoking by parents might be part of the reason.

Health officials report nearly a 30 percent drop over 15 years in young children's doctor visits for ear infections. That's half a million fewer trips to the doctor on average.

Why the numbers are declining is a bit of a mystery, but Harvard researchers think it's partly because fewer people smoke, meaning less irritation of children's airways. Many doctors credit growing use of a vaccine against bacteria that cause ear infections. And some think increased breast-feeding is protecting more children.

"We're sort of guessing here," said Dr. Richard Rosenfeld, a New York-based ear, nose and throat specialist who speaks about the issue for the American Academy of

Pediatrics.

To be sure, middle ear infections still plague many U.S. children. For decades, they were the most common reason parents brought young children to a doctor, according to health officials.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hadn't issued a report on them in nearly 20 years. Cases skyrocketed from 1975-1990. The visit rate for children 5 and under more than doubled in that time.

A big reason, Rosenfeld said, was a steady rise in dual-career families. More families put their kids in day care, and day care is a breeding ground for the germs that lead to ear infections.

But the study by Harvard University suggests another contributor: cigarette smoke.

Most ear infections occur after a cold. In children, the ear is more directly connected to the back of the nose, so infections in a child's nose and throat can easily trigger ear inflammation. Such swelling is a fertile setting for the bacteria that cause ear infections.

Cigarette smoke, inhaled through



Chesnie Shaver, 2, with her mother, Jessica Hyatt, 21, in their Spokane, Wash. house. Hyatt said Chesnie has had four ear infections, including a recent one that lasted close to two months. (AP photo)

a child's nose, can trigger the same kind of irritation and swelling, said Dr. Gordon Hughes of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

CDC figures show that 88 percent of U.S. nonsmokers were exposed to secondhand smoke around 1990, but that fell to about 40 percent in 2007 and 2008.

Harvard research indicates the decline coincides with a drop in childhood ear infections.

"When people are smoking less around their kids, when homes are smoke-free, the rate of ear infections can and has decreased," said Hillel Alpert, lead author of a study published recently by the journal Tobacco Control.



Dr. Billy R. Flowers (above center) and his skilled staff are ready to help those in need.

Second Wind Food Drive

More than 20,000 students in the Portland metro area are mobilizing to fight hunger this month - with a little help from their teachers, neighbors, local businesses and service organizations.

Project Second Wind is the oldest and one of the most successful annual food-and-fund drives in the region. It was started in 1971 by high school students who realized that while food donations drop after the holidays, the need for food does not.

Last year, Project Second Wind

raised 37,254 pounds of food and \$29,752.

Supported by Umpqua Bank, the event supports the Oregon Food Bank's mission to eliminate hunger and its root causes.

"We are proud to support the efforts of our community's youth to help alleviate hunger in Oregon," said Robyn Shuey of Umpqua Bank.

For more information, visit oregonfoodbank.org.

HEALTHWATCH

Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tenderfoot Care -- Treat your feet with a soak, nail trim, buffing and massage from a licensed nurse at one of six clinics or at your home. Call 503-251-6303 for more information.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through

Lead Poisoning Prevention -- Learn how to protect your family from lead poisoning. Ideal for folks in live in older homes with children or pregnant women. Qualified participants receive a free kit of safety and testing supplies. Call 503-284-6827.

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

THE SPINA COLUMN™

An ongoing series of questions and answers about America's natural healing profession.

Part 8. CONSTIPATION:

The backing up of body's sewage system.

Q: Nothing has ever really helped my constipation. What can Chiropractic possibly do?

A: As a natural form of healing, there is much a Chiropractic and the improved lifestyle we recommend can do to remove the immediate distress and long term health hazards of constipation. But before we begin, you should understand that constipation takes two approaches. The first is the tight, sometimes painful feeling in the lower back area. The second and more insidious type is what we call "hidden constipation." This is when we seemingly

move our bowels regularly, but never completely eliminate everything in our colon (large intestine). This causes the colon to back up and spread toxic poisons throughout the body. This can lead to everything from sinusitis to allergies to arthritis.

Chiropractic can help to alleviate this problem by gently turning nerves back on in the colon and small intestine. It is not uncommon for a patient

to have two, three or even four bowel movements after the first adjustments on his or her spine. A man with FBSS (failed back surgical syndrome) went home and had 12 bowel movements that night. And he claimed he wasn't even constipated! Whatever questions you might have about health and healing, you'll find that Chiropractic is often the answer. Call us for an appointment today.

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