

Earache & Facts on Fever

by O. J. Ressel, BSc, DC



Photo by Sandy Wright

You are suddenly awakened out of a well-deserved sleep. Your child is crying in the next room with sudden and intense pain in her ear. She is very hot, flushed and glassy-eyed with fever. Your diagnosis: Ear infection. You panic.

Childhood ear infections (*Otitis media*) are frightening to parents mostly because they tend to appear suddenly, usually at night. But with some insight and common sense, ear infections and fever become a simple part of growing up—a sign that your child's immune system is doing its job!

Fever Frenzy

Most parents know that normal body temperature is 98.6 F. Right?

Wrong! The figure of 98.6 F is an average. Body temperature can fluctuate anywhere between 96 and 101 F and still be “normal.” Parents need to understand that fever is simply heat. When the body's nervous system awakens the immune system's response to fight an impending infection, many normal body activities speed up. This extra activity produces work and work produces heat and fever. It's that simple.

The height of a fever has no bearing on the seriousness of the

condition and there is absolutely no clinical evidence that high fever causes convulsions or brain damage. In fact, Dr Ross Parker, a leading pediatrician at the McMaster University Medical Centre in Hamilton, Ontario, feels that physicians should not take the temperatures of their patients. Dr Richard Mittleman agrees, stating that “the taking of temperature in the doctor's office is basically an unnecessary ritual.”

There is no scientific evidence to indicate that it is necessary, or even wise, to lower the body's temperature. Fever is not the problem, but only the result of the body attempting to deal with an impending infection. It should be viewed as a positive sign: the immune system is doing exactly what it is designed to do. Next time your child has a fever, understand the reason the fever is there in the first place. Do not jump the gun and give your child medication to lower her temperature. Although you may be concerned that it could do some harm, fever is actually a good thing.

An Earful

The most common treatments used for ear infections are antibiotics, decongestants, tympanostomy (tubes in the ears) and surgery. You may be surprised that the benefits of all of these are highly questionable.

A recent clinical study published in the *Lancet*, a major medical research journal, concluded that “recovery time is about the same for children whether medical treatments were done or nothing was done at all.”

In other words, it really didn't matter what medical efforts were made to deal with this condition. Ear infection simply runs its course.

Another study published in the

Archives of Otolaryngology showed that "88 per cent of children with *Otitis media* never needed antibiotics and they do not shorten the span of the disease." As a matter of fact, a very recent (May 1997) edition of *Newsweek* stated that antibiotics are not nearly as effective as the body's own immune system. What a concept!

So why use them?

Good question! For parents frustrated with recurring ear infections, the EENT (ear, eye, nose and throat) specialist will most likely prescribe tympanostomy. It is a surgical procedure whereby your child is left in the hospital to be attended by strangers and anaesthetized so that a tube can be placed in her ear drum to drain fluid. This procedure does nothing to eliminate the problem. It simply reduces pressure and fluid build-up. A barbaric ritual!

Over a million tympanostomies are performed in the United States and Canada each year. Do they work? In controlled clinical studies, it was determined that there was "no benefit gained from the placement of tubes." As a matter of fact, they "actually created complications, such as scar formation on the ear drum," leading to hearing loss. Not a favored side effect!

The late Dr Robert Mendelson, one of the leading pediatricians in the United States, felt that "the entire treatment for ear infections (antibiotics, antihistamines, tubes in the ears, tonsillectomy) represents overkill for a condition that, except in malnourished children, is almost always self-limiting."

Chiropractic Care

So how do kids get these ear infections?

In his landmark book *Vaccination, Social Violence and Criminality*, Dr Harris Coulter sites *Otitis* and hearing loss as one of the most common side effects of vaccination, to the point where over 30 million visits are made to physicians around the United States and Canada each year. This opinion is echoed by Dr Viera Schreibner, one of the world's foremost authorities on vaccinations. Something to ponder!

As chiropractors, we see ear infections as a malfunction of the immune system and lowered immune resistance. In other words, the body is not able to fight off the infection.

The main cause of lowered immune resistance in the baby can be the birth itself. It is very traumatic. The stress associated with the average uncomplicated delivery may cause a vertebral subluxation "misalignment of some of the segments of the spine affecting the way the child's nervous system reacts to

the world around him."

In their landmark research studies, Drs Gutman and Biedermann examined hundreds of newborn babies and concluded that an unhealthy spine at birth "causes many clinical features, from central motor impairment to lowered resistance to infection, especially ear, nose and throat infection."

These physicians were emphatic that "the success of chiropractic care overshadows every other type of treatment."

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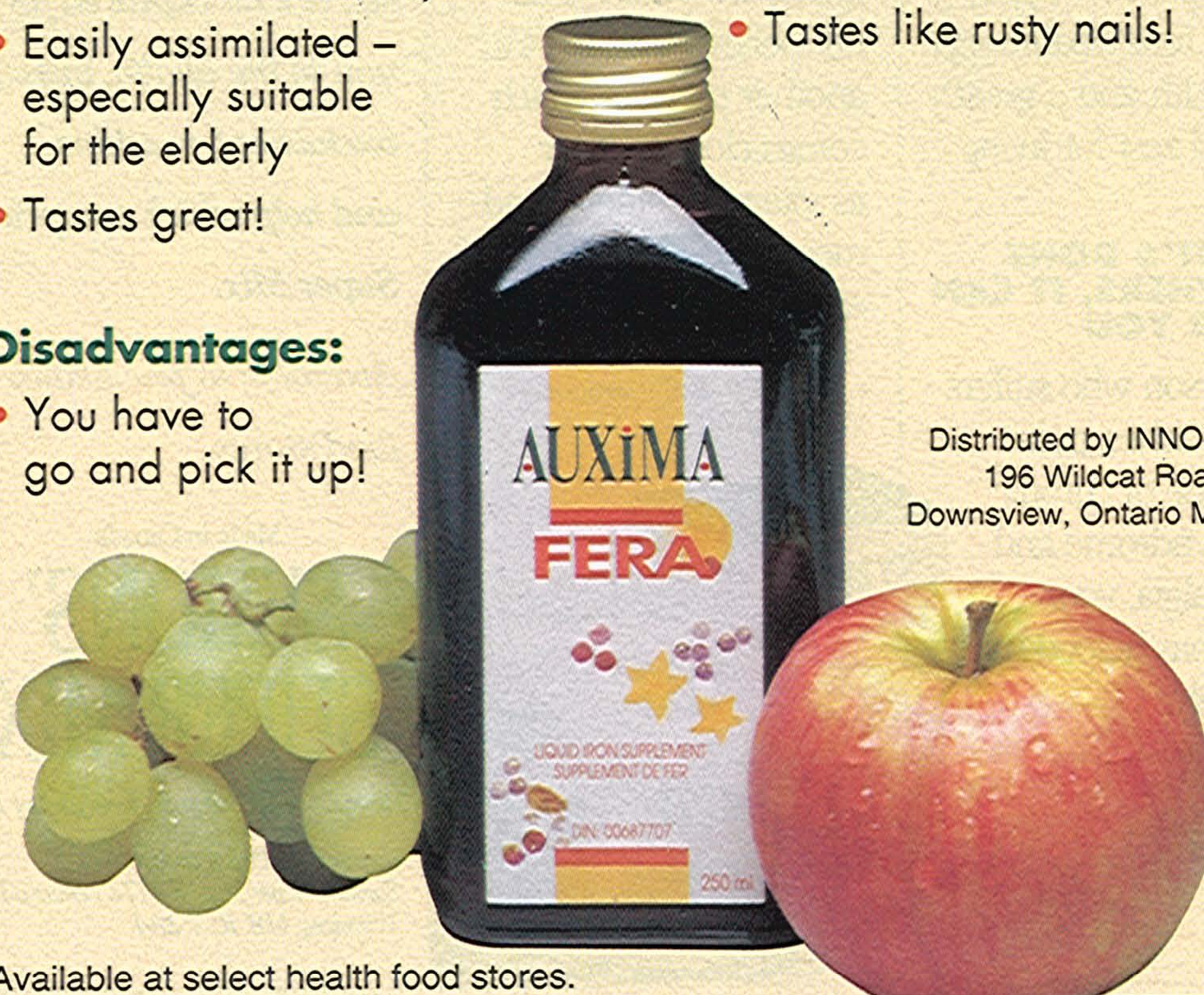
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The Body Knows

In order for this to make sense, parents need to understand that the body is a self-healing and self-regulating organism. In other words, it is designed to heal itself and regulate its own internal functions. When was the last time you had to instruct your stomach how many enzymes and chemicals to produce to digest a meal? The body knows what its doing, and it does it perfectly without our "meddling."

Basically you're on "auto pilot."

You have your very own "internal Internet" that allows your body to run things smoothly. This organic communication network is your nervous system. It controls your entire body and every function within it. As long as there is no interference or "short circuit" to its functions, you should have the best health possible. One type of short circuit is a vertebral subluxation. It tends to interfere with the way your nervous system transmits information, lowering resistance, and making you susceptible to

bacterial or viral invasion.

Chiropractic care is absolutely essential for children, especially in cases where the immune system needs a boost. I have also found that, as an adjunct to chiropractic care, the following will be very helpful in dealing with children who have chronic ear infections:

- I encourage my patients to avoid using Q-tips or shoving anything into the ear canal. Many parents are not aware that ears are designed to clean themselves; when an object is shoved into the ear canal, it causes this self-cleaning mechanism to be clogged. Promotion of wax build-up provides a breeding ground for bacteria.
- Warm salt water drops in the nose will often clear the entrance to the eustachian tube, the blocked passageway between the inner ear and the nose.
- For the child with a full-blown ear infection, I recommend a touch of warm olive oil poured into the affected ear. This will help to alleviate the considerable discomfort almost immediately.
- Vitamin C supplementation is beneficial. The dosage should range from 2,000 to 7,000 mg per day, depending on the age of the child.
- Vitamin A and beta-carotene are important. I recommend an eight-ounce glass of raw carrot juice daily.
- To give the immune system increased function, have your child take zinc lozenges three times a day for approximately seven days. Be careful, however, not to exceed 50 mg per day in total.
- Vitamin B₆ has been known to increase immune system function. And, of course, love, reassurance and lots of hugs and cuddles will do wonders in helping your child towards a speedy recovery! ■

O. J. Ressel practises in Burlington, Ontario.

Recommended Reading:
Healing Childhood Ear Infections
 by M. Schmidt (sc) 312pp \$25.50
Vaccination, Social Violence and Criminality
 by H. Coulter (sc) 300pp \$22.50

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