

# Air quality improvements over the last decade may be a factor in fewer ear infections

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Strides in improving the nation's air quality over the past ten years may be a factor in fewer cases of ear infections (otitis media) in children. These results are according to new research presented at the 2009 American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation (AAO-HNSF) Annual Meeting & OTO EXPO, in San Diego, CA.

The study, which used National Health Interview Survey data of 120,060 [children](#) from 1997-2006, measured how many instances occurred in the previous year for three disease conditions: frequent otitis media (FOM, 3 or more ear infections in the previous 12 months), respiratory allergy, and seizure activity. These numbers were cross-referenced with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality data over the same period. The authors discovered that as [air quality](#) improved, the number of cases of FOM decreased.

The authors believe their research has both medical and political significance. They believe it confirms the benefit of the revised Clean Air Act of 1990, which gave the EPA more authority to implement and enforce regulations reducing air pollutant emissions. They also believe it shows, on a large population-based scale, that these improvements may have direct benefit on health quality measures such as otitis media.

Otitis media is one of the most common illnesses among children, with

annual direct and indirect costs in the \$3-5 billion.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology

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