

MANAGING YOUR SINUSITIS

What Is Sinusitis?

Four hollow spaces in bones of the face are sinuses. Each sinus has an opening to allow air and mucus in the nose to move in and out. If sinuses become blocked, sinusitis, or sinus infection, results. Sinusitis is inflammation or infection of one or more sinuses. Blocked sinuses can also lead to infection caused by bacteria.

Sinusitis is very common. Sinusitis can be sudden and short (acute) or long-lasting (chronic). Sinusitis that lasts less than 4 weeks is called acute sinusitis. When symptoms last for more than 2 months it is called chronic sinusitis.

What Causes Sinusitis?

The cause can be bacteria, allergies, pollution, or nasal polyps. It often starts after a cold or allergic reaction. Having a deviated septum increases the risk of recurrent sinusitis.

What Are the Symptoms of Sinusitis?

Main symptoms are headache and pressure or pain in the forehead or face. The nose may be stuffed and runny, with a green or yellow-green discharge. Swollen eyes, with pain behind them and dark circles underneath, may occur. The throat may become sore. Children may be irritable, and have a long-lasting cough, in addition to sinus congestion. Symptoms usually go away in 7 to 21 days.

How Is Sinusitis Diagnosed?

The health care provider will examine the face, nose, and ears, and listen to the chest. X-rays or maybe other imaging tests of the sinuses may be done in people with chronic sinusitis who have

not been helped with medications. If sinusitis is due to an allergy or sinusitis occurs three times a year or more, the health care provider may suggest seeing an allergist (specialist in allergies).

How Is Sinusitis Treated?

The health care provider may prescribe antihistamines for sinusitis caused by allergies. Nasal sprays and decongestants help congestion. Increasing fluid intake helps thin secretions. Resting with the head slightly raised will let secretions drain easier. For minor pain, acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used.

For sinusitis caused by bacterial infection, the health care provider will prescribe an antibiotic. Most sinus infections are caused by viruses, and antibiotics don't work and shouldn't be taken.

Acute sinusitis usually goes away in 2 to 3 weeks with treatment.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Sinusitis

- ✓ **DO** drink plenty of fluids, especially water.
- ✓ **DO** use a saline nasal spray for nasal congestion.
- ✓ **DO** quit smoking. Smoking can worsen sinusitis.
- ✓ **DO** use a vaporizer or inhale steam from a shower to relieve congestion.
- ✓ **DO** use warm compresses over the sinus area four times a day, for 1 or 2 hours.
- ✓ **DO** use a humidifier in the winter and an air conditioner in the summer.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have lasting fever and chills.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your face swells over the sinuses.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have blurred vision or a severe headache that medicines don't help.

✓ **DO** avoid allergy triggers.

⊗ **DON'T** use over-the-counter nose sprays. They can make symptoms worse.

⊗ **DON'T** travel in an airplane during an acute attack. Pressure changes can make symptoms much worse. Check with your health care provider first if you must fly.

FROM THE DESK OF

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery: Tel: (703) 836-4444;

Website: <http://www.entnet.org>

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