

SINUSITIS

(Sinus Infection or Inflammation)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Infection or inflammation (redness and soreness) of the sinuses. Sinuses are air-filled spaces that make mucus to help clean the air we breathe. They are located behind the eyebrows, inside each cheekbone, and between the eyes. Sinuses open into the nose for mucus and air exchange. Sinusitis can be acute (short illness), or chronic if it continues for several weeks or recurs often.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Nasal congestion with white or greenish-yellow (sometimes blood-tinged) discharge.
- Feeling of pressure inside the head.
- Eye pain.
- Headache that is worse in the morning or when bending forward.
- Cheek pain that may resemble a toothache.
- Post-nasal drip.
- Cough (sometimes) that is usually non-productive.
- Disturbed sleep (sometimes).
- Fever (sometimes).
- Swelling of the sinus openings, blocking the discharge, and increasing pain.

CAUSES

- Bacterial infection. A common cold or allergic reaction can cause the sinuses to swell and increase the amount of mucus they produce. Bacteria begin to grow in the excess mucus in the swollen sinuses and causes the symptoms.
- Fungal infection, such as aspergillosis, may occur in people who have a weakened immune system.
- Allergies that cause swelling of sinuses.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Common cold or other viral illness.
- A weakened immune system due to illness or drugs.
- Swimming or diving.
- Using nasal decongestant sprays too often.
- Growths (polyps) in the nose or a deviated septum.
- People with asthma or an allergic disease.
- Smoking.
- People with cystic fibrosis.
- Dental problems.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Prompt treatment of any cold or other viral infection.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Will often clear up on its own, but may be treated with drugs, or surgery if needed.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Sinusitis may become chronic.
- Rarely, infection may spread into bones, eyes, or brain.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms and recent illnesses, such as a cold. Diagnosis can usually be made based on this information. Medical tests may be done in certain cases, such as repeated infections.
- Drug treatment is aimed at improving symptoms and curing the infection.
- Apply moist heat to relieve pain in the sinuses and nose. Take a warm shower once or twice a day.
- Sinusitis not responding to drug treatment may require surgery to drain blocked sinuses.
- Surgery may be done for polyps or a deviated septum.
- Sinusitis caused by a fungus may require surgery.

MEDICATIONS

- For stuffy nose, use nonprescription nasal decongestants. Limit use to 3 days in a row. Saline nasal sprays may be used several times a day. Nonprescription antihistamines are sometimes helpful.
- For minor pain, you may use drugs such as acetaminophen.
- Drugs to reduce congestion may be prescribed.
- Antibiotics for the infection may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

Resume your normal activities gradually. Exercise can help to clear your head.

DIET

Drink extra fluids to help thin secretions.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of sinusitis.
- The following occur during treatment:
 - Fever; bleeding from the nose; severe headache.
 - Swelling of the face (forehead, eyes, side of the nose, or cheek).

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page