

Sinus Infection

A sinus infection is a bacterial infection of one of the seven sinuses that normally drain into the nose. This is not the same as simple sinus congestion that can occur without a bacterial infection if one of the sinus openings becomes blocked from a cold (virus infection) or hay fever (allergy). A bacterial sinus infection usually takes about two weeks to develop after the start of a cold or allergies. Normally, bacteria are constantly drained out of the sinus before there is a chance for infection to develop, but with a prolonged period of poor drainage, a sinus infection may ensue.

As bacteria multiply within a sinus, pain and pressure occur above the eyebrow, behind the eye, or over the cheekbone. Other symptoms include a nasal discharge, postnasal drip, fever, and bad breath. A sinus infection may cause a chronic cough. Swallowing sinus secretions is normal and harmless but may lead to some nausea.

Green or other colored mucous is not a reliable sign of a bacterial sinus infection, as this is often seen with virus infections also. Headaches are also not a reliable sign, as the pressure in the sinus may be produced from congestion from a cold or allergies, and cold or flu viruses frequently cause muscle tension headaches as well.

HOME TREATMENT

The following treatment should reduce pain and fever within 48 hours or less.

1. Antibiotics

Your child's antibiotic is _____. Your child's dose is _____, given _____ times a day by mouth during waking hours for _____ days. This medicine will kill bacteria that are causing the sinus infection.

Try not to forget any of the doses. If your child goes to school or to a baby sitter, arrange for someone to give the afternoon dose. If the medicine is a liquid, use a measuring spoon to make sure that you give the right amount. Even though your child will feel better in a few days, give the antibiotic until the bottle is empty to prevent the infection from flaring up again. Do not save the antibiotic for the next illness because it loses its strength.

2. Nasal washes

Use warm water or saline nose drops followed by suction or nose blowing to wash dried mucus or pus out of the nose. Do nasal washes at least four times a day or whenever your child can't breathe through the nose.

3. Decongestant nosedrops or spray

To drain the sinuses, use a generic, long-acting decongestant nose drop or spray (such as oxymetazoline). You don't need a prescription for the nose drops or spray. The usual dose for adolescents is two drops or sprays per nostril twice a day. For younger children use one drop or spray a day. Use the medicine routinely for the first 2 or 3 days of treatment. After that, don't use the spray or nose drops unless the sinus congestion or pain recurs. Stop the drops or spray

after 5 days to prevent rebound swelling.

Oral decongestants like pseudoephedrine (Sudafed, Pediacare Infant Decongestant drops) may also be used if they seem to make the nose less stuffy without causing noticeable side effects in your child.

4. Oral antihistamines

If your child also has hay fever, he or she should take allergy medicine (antihistamines, like Benadryl or Chlortrimeton). Otherwise, avoid using antihistamines because they can slow down the movement of secretions out of the sinuses.

5. Pain-relief medicines

Your child can take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for a few days for sinus pain or any fever over 102 degrees F (39 degrees C).

CONTAGIOUSNESS

Sinus infections are not contagious. Your child can return to school or day care when he or she is feeling better and the fever is gone.

Call the pediatric department (784-4190) during office hours if:

The fever or pain is not gone 48 hours after your child starts taking the antibiotic.

- You have other questions or concerns.

Location of Sinuses

