

## Sinusitis

**S**inusitis refers to the infection or inflammation of the sinuses. Sinuses are the air-filled cavities found in the cheekbones, the forehead, and the skull bones between and behind the eyes. The sinus cavities are lined with mucous membranes. Sinus fluids usually drain easily through the nose unless the sinuses become inflamed or infected.

Sinus infections may follow colds, accompany hay fever or asthma, or result from air pollution. Although adults tend to get sinus infections more often than children, even infants and small children can be affected.

For adults, the most common symptom of a sinus infection is pain in the cheekbones, upper teeth, the forehead right above the eyebrows, or around and behind the eyes. Nasal discharge from a sinus infection, which sometimes may drain down the back of the throat, is likely to be persistently yellow or green in color. (Remember that it's not unusual to have a similar type of discharge for a short period of time during a cold.)

In children, the most common symptom of a sinus infection is a chronic stuffy nose. Other symptoms include headache, fever, a sore throat or cough, and mucus running down the back of the throat—known as postnasal drip. Sinus headaches often get worse in the afternoon or when bending over. There are several ways to help prevent sinusitis. First of all, if you smoke—quit. Smokers are more likely to develop sinusitis. In addition, when you have a cold, drink plenty of fluids, get lots of rest, and blow your nose gently.

If you have sinusitis, here are eight suggestions for what you can do to treat it at home:

1. Drink a glass of water or juice every hour that you're awake.
2. Breathe moist air from a humidifier placed in your room or from a hot shower, sink, or pan filled with hot water.
3. Use an oral decongestant or decongestant nasal spray, but don't use products containing antihistamines. Also, don't use an over-the-counter nasal spray for more than three days in a row.
4. If you have a headache, try acetaminophen (such as Tylenol), ibuprofen (such as Motrin), or aspirin (but never give aspirin to children or teens under 20).
5. If you have streaks of mucus at the back of your throat, gargle with warm water to help prevent a sore throat.
6. Sleep with your head raised up on pillows at night. Sometimes sleeping temporarily in a reclining chair can be helpful.
7. Try to wash the mucus and bacteria out of your nasal passages with an over-the-counter saline nasal spray or a homemade solution made by mixing a half-teaspoon of salt with a cup of warm (body temperature) water. Using a bulb syringe, squirt the solution gently into the nose or snuff the solution from the palm of your hand, one nostril at a time. Then blow your nose gently. Do this two to four times a day.
8. Apply warm compresses over the sinus areas three or four times a day.

You should call your doctor or medical professional if mild symptoms last longer than ten to 14 days or get worse over time. You should also call if you have sinus facial pain that lasts longer than two to four days

with home treatment; if the pain is severe; if your face swells or your vision blurs; or if you have signs of a bacterial infection—such as a yellowish-greenish nasal discharge with a high fever or a lower fever that lasts for several days. You may need to be treated with antibiotics for a bacterial infection. If your symptoms persist after taking a full course of antibiotics, call your doctor again.

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