

Title: Sinusitis: What You Need to Know

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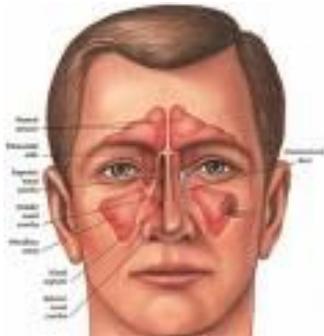
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Abstract: Sinusitis is an infection of the hollow spaces located in the bones of the face. It often follows a cold or allergy attack and can be treated with antibiotics if your doctor decides the infection is caused by bacteria. It is important to recognize the symptoms of sinusitis so that it can be treated properly.

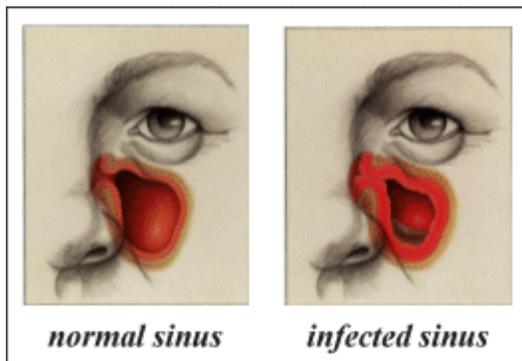
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## Sinusitis: Information for Patients

The sinuses are hollow spaces filled with moist air that are located in the bones of the face.



Sinusitis is inflammation or infection of these spaces by bacteria, viruses or fungus that can occur after a cold or allergy attack. Normally, mucus that is produced in the sinuses can freely drain out through the nose or mouth. However, when these passages become blocked after a cold or allergy attack, germs such as bacteria become trapped in these spaces and create an infection which causes the symptoms of sinusitis.



## How do I know if I have sinusitis or just a cold?

The symptoms of sinusitis can often mimic a cold. However, it is important to recognize when you may have sinusitis, as your symptoms can improve significantly with treatment. You can use this chart to help you decide whether or not your symptoms are from sinusitis, the common cold, or from allergies.

SIGN/ SYMPTOM	SINUSITIS	ALLERGY	COLD
Facial Pressure/ Pain	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Duration of Illness	Over 10-14 days	Varies	Under 10 days
Nasal Discharge	Thick, yellow- green	Clear, thin, watery	Thick, whitish or thin
Fever	Sometimes	No	Sometimes
Headache	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Pain in Upper Teeth	Sometimes	No	No
Bad Breath	Sometimes	No	No
Coughing	Sometimes	Sometimes	Yes
Nasal Congestion	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
Sneezing	No	Sometimes	Yes

If you have 3 or more of these symptoms, you should see your doctor.

## How do you treat sinusitis?

Sinusitis that is caused by bacteria can be treated with antibiotics. Only your doctor can decide if you have sinusitis caused by bacteria. It is important that you take the full course of antibiotics that your doctor prescribes in order to prevent antibiotic resistance. Your doctor may also decide to prescribe an oral or nasal spray, or drop decongestant to relieve symptoms of congestion. Some may also recommend using steroids. In addition, they may recommend inhaling steam or saline nasal washes to help with sinus discomfort.

If your sinusitis persists or becomes chronic, your doctor may prescribe a prolonged course of antibiotics. Some people may even require sinus surgery in order to clean out the sinuses, however, this is only recommended after other treatment options have failed.

## What can I do to prevent sinusitis?

During a cold or allergy attack, you can do the following things to keep your sinuses clear and prevent sinusitis:

- Blow your nose gently and often
- Drink plenty of fluids, this will keep nasal discharge thinner
- Avoid air travel
- Use an oral decongestant or nasal spray
- Avoid allergy triggers if you have allergies

## References:

American Academy of  
Otolaryngology – Head and Neck  
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[www.med.nyu.edu/ent/clinical/rhinology/](http://www.med.nyu.edu/ent/clinical/rhinology/)

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