

Introduction

There are two types of sinusitis: acute (sudden onset) and chronic (long-term). Sinusitis often develops after a cold or viral infection. Most sinus infections improve on their own, but sometimes they develop into a bacterial infection - swelling, inflammation, and mucus production caused by the cold can lead to blockage in the nasal passages, which may encourage the growth of bacteria.

Sinusitis

What is it and how is it treated?



What is Sinusitis?

Sinusitis is an infection of the sinuses, the hollow spaces in your skull around the eyes and nose. When the sinuses are infected, they cause pain and pressure in your head and face.

Frequent Signs and Symptoms

The main symptoms of sinusitis are a runny or stuffy nose and pain and pressure in your head and face. You may also have a yellow or green drainage or drip from your nose or down the back of your throat (post-nasal discharge). Where you feel the pain and tenderness depends on which sinus is affected.

Other common symptoms of sinusitis may include:

- A headache.
- Bad breath.
- A cough that produces mucus.
- A fever.
- Pain in your teeth.
- A reduced sense of taste or smell.

What Causes Sinusitis?

Sinusitis is most often the result of a viral infection that causes the mucous membrane lining the inside of the nose and the sinuses to become inflamed.

- The mucous membrane swells when it becomes inflamed, blocking the drainage of fluid from the sinuses into the nose and throat.
- Mucus and fluid buildup inside the sinuses, causing pressure and pain.
- Bacteria are more likely to grow in sinuses that are unable to drain properly. Bacterial infection in the sinuses often causes more inflammation and pain.

Colds usually trigger this process, but any factor that causes the mucous membrane to become inflamed may lead to sinusitis. Many people with nasal allergies (allergic rhinitis), for instance, are likely to have recurring or long-term (chronic) sinus infections. Nasal polyps, foreign objects (usually in children), structural problems in the nose such as a deviated septum, and other conditions can also block the nasal passages, increasing the risk of sinusitis. Fungal infections may also cause sinusitis and may be harder to treat.



How is Sinusitis Treated?

Viral sinus infections usually go away on their own within 10 to 14 days. Antibiotics don't work for viral infections. But there are some things you can do at home to help relieve your symptoms:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Try over-the-counter pain relievers and decongestant pills to help relieve the pain and pressure in your head and face.
- Put a hot, damp towel or gel pack on your face for 5 to 10 minutes at a time, several times a day.
- Breathe warm, moist air from a steamy shower, a hot bath, or a sink filled with hot water.
- Use saline nose drops and sprays to keep the nasal passages moist and use saline nasal washes to help keep the nasal passages open and wash out mucus and bacteria.

Bacterial infections can be treated with antibiotics. You will probably feel better in a few days, but some symptoms may last for several weeks.

Other Info...

Your doctor can tell if you have sinusitis by asking questions about your past health and doing a physical examination. You probably won't need any other tests.