

# Sinusitis

## What is sinusitis?

Sinusitis is swelling of the linings of the sinuses. The sinuses are hollow spaces in the bones of your face and skull. They connect with the nose through small openings. Like the nose, they are lined with membranes that make mucus.

## What is the cause?

A number of things can cause swelling of the passageways. Most often it's allergens or a virus. Allergens are the things that cause allergies, like pollen and mold. Viruses are a common cause of colds and flu.

The passageways from the sinuses to the nose are very narrow. Swelling and mucus may block the passageways, trapping bacteria, viruses, or even fungus in the sinuses. These organisms can grow in the warm, moist environment and cause a sinus infection.

If your nasal bones have been injured or are deformed, or if you have little growths called polyps in the sinuses, you may have partial blockage of the sinus openings. This can make it more likely that you will have sinusitis.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Feeling of fullness or pressure in your face or head
- A headache that is most painful when you first wake up in the morning or when you bend over and put your head down
- Pain in your face
- Aching in the upper jaw and teeth
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Cough, especially at night
- Fluid draining down the back of your throat (postnasal drip)
- Sore throat, especially in the morning or evening

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. You may have an X-ray of the sinuses to look for swelling, fluid, or polyps in the sinuses.

## How is it treated?

Decongestants may help. They may be nonprescription or prescription. They are available as liquids, pills, and nose sprays.

Your healthcare provider may prescribe an antibiotic if it's likely you have a bacterial infection. In some cases you may need to take decongestants and antibiotics for several weeks.

You may need nonprescription medicine for pain, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

- Check with your healthcare provider before you give any medicine that contains aspirin or salicylates to a child or teen. This includes medicines like baby aspirin, some cold medicines, and Pepto-Bismol. Children and teens who take aspirin are at risk for a serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen and aspirin, may cause stomach bleeding and other problems. These risks increase with age. Read the label and take as directed. Unless recommended by your healthcare provider, do not take for more than 10 days for any reason.

If you have chronic or repeated sinus infections, allergies may be the cause. Your healthcare provider may prescribe antihistamine tablets or a nasal spray (steroids or cromolyn) to treat the allergies during your allergy season or, in some cases, year-round. Using a steroid for a long time can have serious side effects. If steroid medicine is prescribed for you, take it exactly as your healthcare provider prescribes. Don't take more or less of it than prescribed by your provider and don't take it longer than prescribed. Don't stop taking a steroid without your provider's approval. You may have to lower your dosage slowly before stopping it.

If you have chronic, severe sinusitis that does not respond to treatment with medicines, surgery may be done. The surgeon can create an extra or enlarged passageway in the wall of the sinus cavity. This allows the sinuses to drain more easily through the nasal passages. This should help them stay free of infection.

Depending on what caused the sinusitis and how severe it is, it may last for days or weeks. For most cases of sinusitis, the symptoms get better gradually over 3 to 10 days. The symptoms may come back if you don't finish all of your antibiotic.

## **How can I take care of myself?**

- Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- If you are taking an antibiotic, take all of it as directed by your provider. If you stop taking the medicine when your symptoms are gone but before you have taken all of the medicine, symptoms may come back. Some sinus infections need 2 to 4 weeks of antibiotic treatment.
- Avoid tobacco smoke.
- If you have allergies, try to avoid the things you are allergic to, like animal dander.
- Add moisture to the air in your home with a humidifier or a vaporizer, unless you have a mold allergy (mold may grow in your vaporizer).
- Inhale steam from a basin of hot water or shower to open your sinuses and relieve pain.
- Use saline nasal sprays or rinses to help wash out nasal passages and clear some mucus from the airways.

- Use decongestants as directed on the label or by your provider.
- If you are using a nonprescription nasal-spray decongestant, generally you should not use it for more than 3 days. After 3 days it may make your symptoms worse. Ask your healthcare provider if it is OK for you to use a nasal spray decongestant longer than this.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink more fluids to keep the mucus as thin as possible so your sinuses can drain more easily.
- Put warm, moist cloths on painful areas.
- Ask your healthcare provider:
  - How and when you will hear your test results
  - How long it will take to recover
  - What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
  - How to take care of yourself at home
  - What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them
- Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

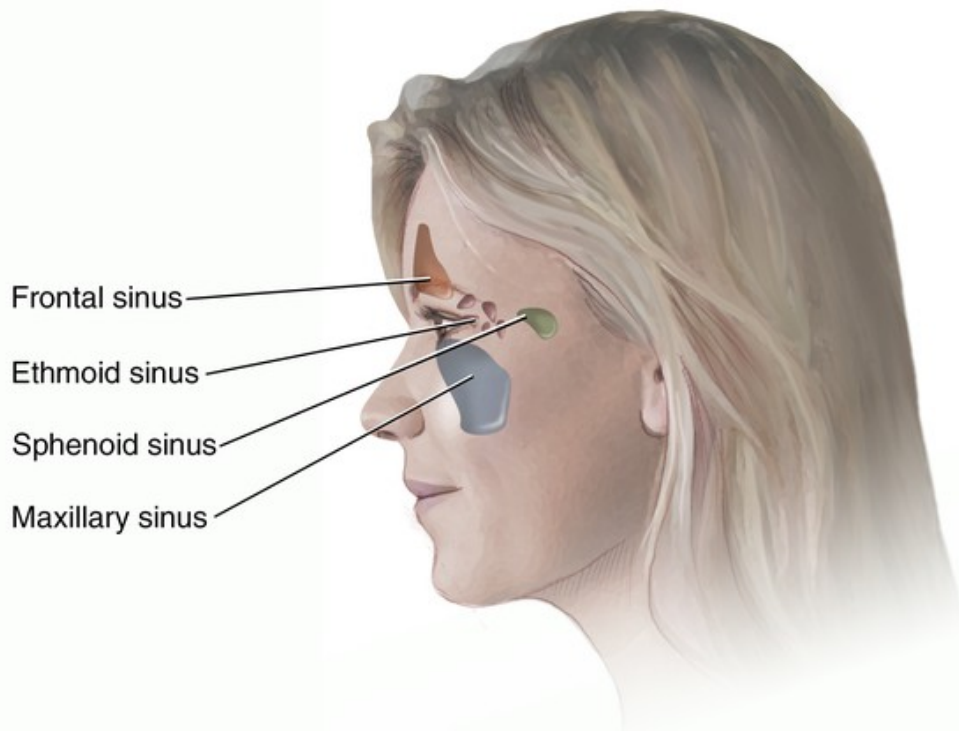
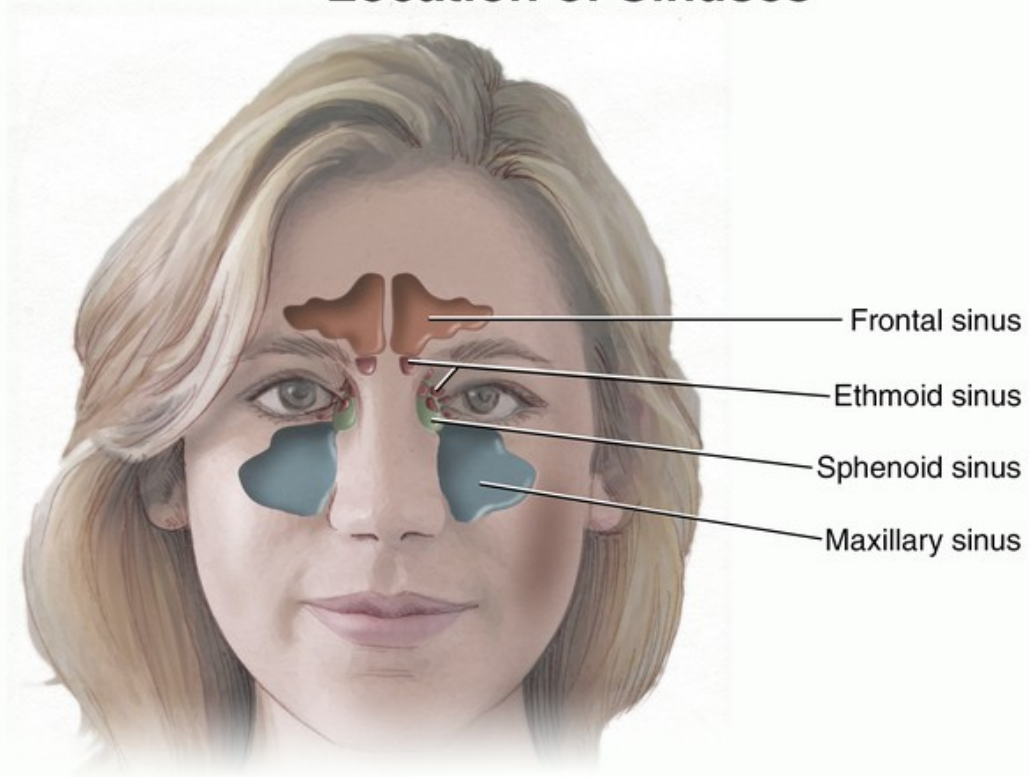
## **How can I help prevent sinusitis?**

- Treat your colds and allergies promptly. Use decongestants as soon as you start having symptoms.
- Do not smoke and stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Drink lots of fluids to keep the mucus thin.
- Humidify your home if the air is particularly dry.
- If you have sinus infections often, consider having allergy tests.
- If sinusitis keeps being a problem despite treatment, you might need an exam by an ear, nose, and throat doctor (called an ENT or otolaryngologist). The specialist will check for polyps or a deformed bone that may be blocking your sinuses.

Developed by RelayHealth.

*This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.*

## Location of Sinuses



Copyright ©2014 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All rights reserved.