

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

SINUSITIS



Sinusitis is an infection of one or more of the sinuses surrounding the nose. Sinuses are hollow spaces that make mucus, a fluid that cleans bacteria and other particles out of the air you breathe. 95% of the time, sinus symptoms are due to a viral upper respiratory infection. However, if the opening to a sinus cavity becomes clogged, a bacterial infection can occur, which is often treated with antibiotics. Bacterial sinusitis is most often diagnosed when symptoms persist for 10 days without improvement or if symptoms worsen after initial improvement.

DIAGNOSIS

Based on symptoms and physical exam.

TREATMENT

- Rest, decrease activity, avoid over-exertion
- Increase fluid intake
- Gargle salt water (1/4 tsp salt in 4-8 oz warm water)
- Elevate head during sleep or sleep on side to reduce congestion
- Use humidifier/vaporizer if possible
- Avoid smoking, second-hand smoke and alcohol- it can worsen the swelling in your sinuses

If antibiotics are prescribed, follow the instructions on the label and complete the entire course. Over-the-counter medications will not shorten the course of illness but may relieve symptoms:

CONGESTION	Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed), Phenylephrine, Saline Nasal Spray, Nasal Irrigation (Neti Pot)
PAIN, HEADACHE, FEVER	Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
COUGH	Mucus-thinners (Mucinex), Decongestants (Sudafed)
SORE THROAT	Cough drops/throat lozenges

CALL STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IF:

- Temperature greater than 100.4°F persists for more than 3-4 days
- Severe headache, blurred vision, increased facial swelling, neck stiffness
- Worsening of symptoms, especially on one side
- Skin rash, painful joints, persistent vomiting
- Chest pain, shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing saliva
- Persistent symptoms for more than 10 days with no improvement

RESOURCES

FamilyDoctor.org <https://familydoctor.org/condition/sinusitis/>

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/acute-sinusitis/symptoms-causes>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/community/for-patients/common-illnesses/sinus-infection.html>

SYMPTOMS

- Feeling of pressure in cheeks, forehead, nose or between eyes
- Sore throat, cough
- Nasal discharge/congestion
- Pain in upper teeth
- Ears feeling plugged, popping
- Fever/chills

RISK FACTORS

- Upper respiratory infection
- Seasonal allergies
- Nasal polyps, deviated nasal septum
- Smoke exposure

PREVENTION

- Eat healthy foods, exercise, get adequate sleep
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Wash hands frequently with soap, avoid touching eyes/mouth, cough/sneeze into your elbow
- Clean common surfaces such as counters and doorknobs with antibacterial disinfectant
- Avoid cigarette smoke and polluted air
- Use a humidifier to moisten the air