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## SELF-CARE INFORMATION ON SINUSITIS

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*Acute sinusitis is self-limiting and usually triggered by a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract (e.g., a common cold), with only about 2% of cases complicated by bacterial infection.*

*Symptoms can last for 2 to 3 weeks, and most people recover within this time without treatment, regardless of cause, so antibiotics are not needed for most people. The number of people improving with antibiotics is similar to the number getting adverse effects, such as diarrhoea.*

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### **What are sinuses?**

Sinuses are cavities in our face bones that open up into the nose, helping to control the water content and temperature of the air reaching our lungs.

### **What is sinusitis?**

The body's response to irritants or bugs (inflammation) can lead to sinusitis: a swelling and irritation of the lining of the sinuses. Viral infections, such as the common cold are the most common cause of the lining of the nose swelling, which then blocks the small opening from the sinuses to the nose. Fluid inside the sinuses may build up, which can make you feel bunged up and stuffy.

Sinusitis can be acute (resolving within 12 weeks) or chronic (lasting longer than 12 weeks).

### **What are the symptoms?**

The most common symptoms include a blocked or runny nose, pain and tenderness in the face, and a raised body temperature. Additional symptoms are headache, cough, pressure in your ears, feeling generally unwell, bad breath, tiredness, and reduced taste and smell.

### **What can I expect to happen?**

- The symptoms of acute sinusitis last longer than the common cold and take about 2 ½ weeks to clear. Chronic sinusitis may last for months.
- In most people, sinusitis will get better without treatment.
- If you have severe or recurrent sinusitis, they may refer you to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist for further assessment

### **Management**

- *Warm face packs* - Apply moist heat (using a hot, damp towel or gel pack) to your face for 5-10 minutes several times a day.

- *Steam inhalation* - Breathe warm moist air from a steamy shower, hot bath or a bowl of hot water. Specially designed steamers and humidifiers can be helpful. Avoid cool dry air as much as possible.
- *Saltwater nasal douches* - Help keep the nasal passages open and wash out mucus and bacteria. This can be bought from pharmacy or made at home (ensure using distilled or cool boiled water).
- *Nose blowing* - If you need to blow your nose, do it gently. Forceful blowing may force mucus back into your sinuses. Keep both nostrils open when blowing your nose. Keeping well hydrated helps to keep the mucus thin.
- *Fluids and food* - Drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost from sweating and a runny nose. Get some rest until you feel better – we usually know when we're well enough to return to normal activities. Eat healthily, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Avoid alcohol, it causes swelling of the tissues lining the nose and sinuses.
- *Over the counter painkillers* - Paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin can help reduce the symptoms of sinusitis. Avoid giving aspirin to children under the age of 16 and follow the manufacturer's instructions. A decongestant preparation for your nose (for a maximum of one week) can help if a blocked nose is the problem.
- *Nasal decongestants* – these shouldn't be used for more than a week, as this might make things worse
- *Steroid nasal spray*- can help relief symptoms if things aren't settling. *Beconase* can be purchased from your pharmacist.
- *Will I need antibiotics?* - The symptoms of sinusitis usually get better on their own without treatment. Antibiotics are unlikely to help unless the symptoms are severe.

### **When should I seek medical help?**

If your symptoms are mild and getting better, you don't usually need to see your GP and can look after yourself at home. Contact the practice for urgent advice if:

- You develop a high temperature (above 39°C or 102.2°F), which can be a sign of a more serious type of infection.
- You're confused or disorientated.
- You feel significantly unwell.
- You're at high risk of complications because you suffer other medical conditions.
- You suffer severe pain or discomfort in your face, particularly if this is one sided.
- Your symptoms haven't started to improve after 10 days
- You experience frequent recurrent episodes of sinusitis

### ***Useful contacts***

- Ask your pharmacist
- Patient UK - [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)
- NHS Choices, [www.nhs.uk/conditions/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/)

### ***If you have further questions:***

Call the **practice** on 01285 653184 or 01285 653122

If you require **urgent** medical advice, call 111 (24 Hrs)

In an **emergency** call **999**

