

**What is Sinusitis?** (1)

Sinuses are air spaces in the bones of your face. They produce mucus to protect the lining of the nose. The mucus also catches particles entering your nose and helps remove them.

Sinusitis occurs when the lining of the sinuses becomes inflamed. This can be due to allergies, infection, or other causes. The inflammation causes swelling. The swelling causes your symptoms by not allowing fluid to drain. The fluid thickens and becomes thicker and can become green.

**How did I get sick? (**2,3)

Acute sinusitis occurs after touching your eyes or nose with an infectious agent on your hand. These agents are often picked up after touching surfaces. Washing your hands or using an alcohol based hand sanitizer can reduce your risk.

**Should I get antibiotics?**

The majority of acute cases are viral. Less than 2% of cases are bacterial. Antibiotics do not treat viral infections.

**How can I treat my symptoms?** (2,3,4)

You can use acetaminophen or NSAIDs for pain and fever. NSAIDs include ibuprofen and naproxen (Aleve). Treatment with saline irrigation and intranasal glucocorticoids can also help symptoms. If using a saline irrigation system, do not use tap water. Use distilled or boiled water for your safety. Tap water may have small amounts of organisms. These are normally killed by stomach acid. However, it makes tap water unsafe for irrigation.

For acute, infectious sinusitis antihistamines do not have evidence supporting their use. These include allergy medications such as Loratadine (Claritin), fexofenadine (Allegra), and cetirizine (Zyrtex).

Decongestants also lack strong evidence to support use. They should not be used for more than a few days. If used longer than that, they can worsen symptoms. This occurs due to a rebound effect that produces more mucus.

**When should I talk to my doctor again?** (2,3)

If your symptoms get worse, or change. This may indicate a bacterial “super infection.” This is when bacteria are able to infect the lining of your sinuses. It is easier for bacteria to do this because of damage from the viral infection.

If symptoms continue for more than 10 days. Viral sinusitis typically improves by 7 to 10 days. Bacterial sinusitis has symptoms beyond 10 days. Prolonged symptoms could mean you have a bacterial infection.

Contact medical services such as the emergency room if any of the following symptoms occur. They can indicate a severe infection.

* Fevers > 102.
* Abnormal eye movements.
* Vision changes.
* Altered mental status (confusion, very sleepy).

References:

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3. ANN M. ARING, MD, and MIRIAM M. CHAN, PharmD, Riverside Methodist Hospital, Columbus, Ohio. *Am Fam Physician.* 2011 May 1;83(9):1057-1063. https://www.aafp.org/afp/2011/0501/p1057.html
4. “Sinusitis: Overview.” *Current Neurology and Neuroscience Reports.*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 18 Oct. 2018, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279485/.