



Q: What is sinusitis?

A: It is an infection in one or more of your sinus cavities surrounding the nose. If the opening to a sinus passage becomes clogged a resultant infection can occur. Causes of this are allergies, nasal polyps, deviated septum, and enlarged adenoids. Often sinusitis occurs as a complication of a cold. It can cause a lot of facial pressure particularly in the areas of the cheeks and eyebrows. In addition it may also cause nasal discharge, a bad taste in your mouth, an upper tooth ache, fever, sore throat and/or cough.

Q: I think I might have it. What can I do for it?

A: There are a number of things you can do for it:

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** This helps control your fever and diminish aches and pains
- **Rest.** You don't have to stay in bed but you should take it easy as much as possible. The energy you would use for physical exertion could be better used by your body to fight the infection.
- **Humidify the air.** Use a cool mist vaporizer, take a steamy shower, hang wet towels around your room, or place a warm moist washcloth over your face.
- **Use salt-water nose spray.** You can purchase this over the counter or make your own by placing ½ teaspoon of salt in an 8 oz glass of water.
- **Take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve).** These help with muscle aches and fever. It is not advisable to take aspirin.
- **Don't smoke.** Avoid second hand smoke.
- **Use oral decongestants (such as Sudafed).** This may relieve excessive nasal discharge and stuffiness. Preparations without an antihistamine in them are less likely to cause drowsiness. Decongestants can make some people feel jittery, unable to sleep and may cause a dry mouth.
- **Cough syrups** which contain dextromethorphan may be helpful in suppressing your cough if you have one.
- **Gargle with warm, salt water** (½ teaspoon in an 8 oz glass of water) every 3 to 4 hours to soothe throat pain which often occurs when there is drainage from the sinuses down the back of the throat (post nasal drip).



Q: But I have had this for 5 days now and I need to get better quickly. I think I need an antibiotic.

A: Research has demonstrated that 87% of inflamed sinuses are caused by viruses which do not respond to antibiotic treatment. These colds should be resolved in about 10 days. Only 2% are caused by bacteria. The recommended guidelines state that antibiotic therapy should be reserved for patients taking decongestants and pain medicine for 10 days who also have facial pain and thick pus like nasal drainage. Antibiotics are recommended sooner if there is severe pain and high fever.