



**FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS
ABOUT SINUSITIS**

Metropolitan  ENT
& Facial Plastic Surgery

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Do I have acute sinusitis or chronic sinusitis?



Acute sinusitis generally lasts up to four weeks, and can include some or all of the following symptoms:

- Thick, yellow or green nasal discharge
- Stuffy nose
- Pain and pressure in or around the face, eyes, and forehead
- Fever
- Pain in the mouth or teeth
- Bad breath (halitosis)
- Coughing

Although it mimics many of the same symptoms as acute sinusitis, chronic sinusitis is a more serious problem. Chronic cases of sinusitis will last for more than six weeks. While acute sinusitis is caused by a simple infection, its chronic form is a product of severe inflammation that can dramatically worsen over time.

In addition to losing your sense of smell, chronic sinusitis can cause pus to drain from your nose, or even nasal polyps, which are benign growths inside the sinus or nasal cavities that can be extremely uncomfortable.

Symptoms of chronic sinusitis may include the following:

- Difficulty breathing due to severe nasal obstruction or congestion
- Drainage from the nose
- Decreased sense of smell and taste
- Pain, swelling, and tenderness around the eyes and forehead

Differentiating chronic sinusitis from acute sinusitis involves much more than a simple visit to your doctor. Generally, your physician will need to take either a CT scan of your sinuses or use an endoscope (a small camera inserted through the nasal passages) to confirm the presence of inflammation and/or polyps, which are indicative of the condition.

Do I need antibiotics for my acute sinusitis?



Among the general population, antibiotics are frequently thought of as a cure-all for most sicknesses we encounter. Sinus problems are no exception. Often times, doctors prematurely prescribe antibiotics for patients who present with symptoms of sinusitis.

What many people don't realize is that acute sinusitis can either be bacterial or viral. Antibiotics will only work for bacterial infections and prove to be an ineffective treatment for viral infections. Improper use of this class of medication may, in fact, prove harmful and increase your body's resistance to the drug.

Proper treatment depends on recognizing the differences between bacterial and viral sinus infections. To further complicate the issue, the signs and symptoms are virtually identical to those of a common cold. However, a cold virus normally runs its course in less than ten days, whereas bacterial sinus infections last longer than ten days.

Before turning to antibiotics, you may be advised to monitor your symptoms for up to seven days after you've been diagnosed with acute sinusitis. If your sinusitis symptoms continue to deteriorate, it's likely you are dealing with a bacterial infection that would respond well to an antibiotic, like amoxicillin.

Symptoms associated with a worsening progression of the condition may include: continued sneezing and nasal discomfort, ear problems and trouble breathing through the nose (especially uncomfortable during sleep).

What kind of chronic sinusitis do I have?

You know you have a severe case of sinusitis, often referred to as chronic sinusitis or chronic rhinosinusitis, when you experience symptoms like mucus buildup, drainage, facial pain and swelling that last for more than six weeks at a time.

To complicate matters, there's more than one type of chronic sinusitis. In order to properly treat your condition, it's important to pinpoint exactly which kind of chronic sinusitis you have.

The three types of chronic sinusitis are:

- Chronic sinusitis without nasal polyps
- Chronic sinusitis with nasal polyps
- Allergic fungal sinusitis



1. Chronic Sinusitis Without Nasal Polyps

Accounting for more than half of all cases of chronic sinusitis, this type of sinusitis is often confused with acute sinusitis because many of the symptoms are similar. But the difference lies in the number of weeks that symptoms linger.

Common symptoms of chronic sinusitis without nasal polyps include:

- Reduced sense of taste
- Congestion
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Facial Pain / pressure

Severe symptoms of chronic sinusitis without nasal polyps include:

- Shortness of breath
- Severe headaches
- Mental confusion

Risk factors for this condition include:

- Frequent exposure to pollutants
- Asthma
- Hay fever
- Immune system disorder

2. Chronic Sinusitis with Nasal Polyps

Chronic sinusitis with nasal polyps affects around 20-30% of patients who are diagnosed with chronic sinusitis. Unlike regular chronic sinusitis (without nasal polyps), this variety means that you also have soft growths called polyps on the lining of your nasal passages or sinuses.

Nasal polyps form when the lining of the nasal and/or sinus cavities becomes swollen and inflamed, causing it to produce extra fluid. Polyps are noncancerous growths full of fluid and inflammatory cells. Due to the cells and fluid build-up, the growths may become enlarged and problematic.

Nasal polyps can worsen sinusitis symptoms overall because they can disrupt normal mucus drainage, especially if they are blocking the sinus cavity openings.

Common symptoms of chronic sinusitis with nasal polyps include:

- Snoring
- Post-nasal drip
- Facial pain
- Headaches
- Decreased sense of smell

Severe symptoms of chronic sinusitis with nasal polyps include:

- Significant swelling
- Serious difficulty breathing
- Worsening symptoms

Risk factors for this condition include:

- Asthma
- Churg-Strauss Syndrome
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Aspirin sensitivity

3. Allergic Fungal Sinusitis

Allergic fungal sinusitis is an allergic reaction caused by environmental fungi that are finely dispersed in the air. This condition requires surgery in order to safely remove the mucin and fungal debris that develop in the sinus cavities. When this condition is left untreated, an individual may suffer vision loss and displacement of the eyeball.

Common symptoms of allergic fungal sinusitis include:

- Loss of smell
- Facial pressure
- Nasal discharge
- Nasal obstruction

Severe symptoms of allergic fungal sinusitis include:

- Double vision
- Vision loss
- Production of nasal crust

Risk factors for this condition include:

- Hypersensitivity to common environmental elements
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Immune deficiency diseases

Why do I have chronic sinusitis?



Chronic sinusitis is a condition that often continues for two months or more, despite attempts to treat it. In many cases, infection may play an initial role in developing the condition, but researchers now believe that the exact cause(s) may be more complex.

The following factors are all things that may contribute to the development of chronic sinusitis:

Deviated Septum or Nose Fracture

The nasal septum is a thin wall of cartilage and bone, which runs through the midline of your nasal cavity, dividing it into two equal passages. For individuals who have a septum that's crooked, or deviated, this may have been present since birth or the result of an injury to the nose, such as a fracture. The difference in size between the nasal passages can cause one or both nostrils to become blocked, ultimately contributing to the development of chronic sinusitis for some individuals.

Allergies

Allergies can be a major contributor to sinus blockage. Similar immune factors have been observed in people with chronic sinusitis and people with allergic rhinitis, which suggests that chronic sinusitis may result from an allergic response in some people.

Fungus

Researchers have found fungal organisms surrounded by inflammatory cells in the mucus of patients who underwent surgery for chronic sinusitis. Studies have suggested that fungus may cause an immune disorder that triggers this issue.

Smoking

Smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke puts you in contact with chemicals that can damage the immune system. In addition, researchers think that contact with tobacco smoke may make it easier for allergens and toxins to enter the membranes that line the nose and sinuses.

Other Environmental Pollutants

Environmental pollutants such as industrial chemicals and dust can damage the cilia, which are small hair-like structures that move mucus through the sinuses. This may lead to a build-up of mucus, resulting in inflammation causing sinusitis.

Certain Medical Conditions

Some medical conditions that weaken the immune system, produce inflamed nasal airways, or lead to increased mucus have been linked to chronic sinusitis. These include cystic fibrosis, diabetes, and AIDS.

Immunodeficiency Problems

Simply put, immune deficiency makes people more likely to acquire infections. IgA is a type of protein that helps protect the respiratory tract from infections, so if you're deficient in this type of protein, you may be more prone to chronic sinusitis, as well as ear infections and pneumonia.

Biofilms

Biofilms are communities of bacteria can be resistant to antibiotics. Research has suggested that biofilms can cause the immune system to react too strongly, causing the symptoms of sinusitis.

Toxins

Researchers have proposed the idea that Staph aureus bacteria release a toxin in people who have chronic sinusitis with nasal polyps. They think that this may cause severe inflammation, which results in recurring polyps and symptoms associated with asthma, like wheezing.

While the symptoms of chronic sinusitis are not fun to endure, fortunately, there are numerous

What are my treatment options for chronic sinusitis?



treatment options available to relieve them. Treatments frequently used for chronic sinusitis include the following:

Saline Nasal Rinses

Irrigating the nose with saline solution helps thin out and remove excess mucus. Using a nasal rinse may feel strange at first, but it can often provide relief. You can buy sinus rinse devices that come with pre-measured packets, or you can make your own rinse at home.

Steroid Combined with Nasal Wash

A steroid called budesonide can be added to nasal irrigation solutions. People with asthma use it to prevent asthma attacks, but it can also be used in a nasal wash to help treat chronic sinusitis.

Antibiotics

If your chronic sinusitis is caused by a bacterial infection, antibiotics may be prescribed to treat you. However, in cases where sinusitis is caused by viral infections, antibiotics may be ineffective.

Corticosteroids

Steroid medications such as prednisone can help reduce or prevent inflammation in your nasal membranes. They are only taken for short periods of time since they can have serious side effects if they are taken long term, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or osteoporosis.

Nasal Steroid Sprays

Nasal steroid sprays can help reduce swelling and shrink nasal polyps. Steroid sprays can be taken for longer periods of time than are steroid medications because they primarily affect your nasal passages rather than your entire body. They can cause some side effects, such as nosebleeds or headaches, but these are usually mild.

Balloon Sinuplasty

Balloon Sinuplasty is a cutting-edge, minimally invasive procedure that utilizes a small, flexible, sinus balloon catheter that is inserted through the nostril. The balloon opens up blocked sinus passageways, restoring normal sinus drainage. It effectively restructures and widens the walls of the passageway while maintaining the integrity of the sinus lining. The entire procedure can be performed right from the doctor's office.

Sinus Surgery

If your chronic sinusitis is resistant to other treatments, sinus surgery may be your best option. There are several different types of sinus surgery that can be performed and your physician will be able to determine the best option for your needs after a full examination. One type of surgery called a polypectomy can be performed to remove nasal polyps that are causing blockage. A septoplasty may be performed on patients with a deviated septum. With new technologies, sinus surgery is much less invasive today than it once was and many procedures can now be performed using an endoscope (small camera inserted through the nasal passages) to view inside the sinuses and fix the underlying problems without making any incisions on the face.

If you are suffering from symptoms of chronic sinusitis, consider making an appointment with one of our board-certified physicians to learn about your treatment options. We specialize in tailoring treatments that are designed around each patient's individual needs and we can help you get relief from your chronic sinusitis symptoms once and for all.

When should I consider surgery?

Surgery for chronic sinusitis is only recommended in severe cases when conservative treatments are not able to relieve your symptoms. If you specifically have chronic sinusitis with nasal polyps, you may benefit from a surgery called a polypectomy.

Nasal polyps are noncancerous growths in the lining of your nose. They're usually found in the area where the sinuses open into the nasal cavity. These polyps often grow in response to long-term swelling and irritation caused by chronic sinusitis or chronic allergic rhinitis.

Symptoms of Nasal Polyps

Nasal polyps can be small and require no treatment, or they can be larger and cause ongoing issues, like blocking normal mucus drainage from your sinuses. When this happens, nasal polyps can cause the following symptoms:

- Sinusitis
- Nasal congestion
- Nasal obstruction
- Persistent sinus discharge
- Sneezing
- Wheezing
- Sensitivity to dust, fumes, and odors
- Runny nose
- Reduced sense of smell or taste
- Itching around the eyes
- Facial pain
- Broadening of the nasal bridge (with particularly large polyps)

Treating Nasal Polyps

Nasal polyps are often treated with medications, which can help relieve the symptoms. However, medications may fail to eliminate the polyps themselves, and even if they do, polyps can come back if their underlying cause remains.

When to Consider Surgery

A polypectomy surgery may be recommended if your polyps (and their underlying cause) aren't responding well to medication. Surgery allows your doctor to remove the polyps and address any other issues that may be blocking mucus from draining properly from your sinuses.

What a Polypectomy Involves

The procedure is performed while you're under general anesthesia. Your surgeon will use an endoscope, a tube with a tiny camera at one end, to see inside your nose and sinuses. During the procedure, surgical instruments are used to remove the polyps and any other blockages, such as scar tissue.

The instruments are inserted through your nostrils, so it won't be necessary to make any incisions on your face and you can generally go home the same day as surgery. You'll have increased airflow through your nose once the polyps are removed, so breathing should be significantly easier after proper healing has occurred.

Are my allergies causing my chronic sinusitis?



Allergic rhinitis, also known as hay fever, is a condition that occurs when you breathe in something that you are allergic to, causing the inside of your nose to become inflamed and swollen.

What Causes Hay Fever?

Allergic rhinitis is caused by allergens that can be found both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor allergens such as grass, mold, and pollen from trees and weeds, can all cause seasonal allergies that are also referred to as hay fever. Allergic rhinitis may also be triggered by indoor allergens, including house dust mites, indoor mold and animal dander.

Is There a Link Between Hay Fever and Sinusitis?

People suffering from hay fever are more likely to develop chronic sinusitis. This is because the substances that trigger an allergic reaction, including pollen, cigarette smoke, dust mites and mold spores, can cause chronic inflammation of the mucous membranes lining the sinus cavities. Such inflammation can inhibit proper drainage of mucus and bacteria from the sinuses, increasing your level of risk for developing a secondary bacterial infection like sinusitis.

Is there a connection between chronic sinusitis and asthma?



Medical practitioners have generally agreed that there is a connection between chronic sinusitis and asthma. Nearly a fifth of all patients diagnosed with chronic sinusitis also have asthma.

The problem is compounded by the fact that one condition can increase complications in the other. Lack of proper medical treatment can result in prolonged sinusitis, lasting months or even years in some cases.

The good news is that both chronic sinusitis and asthma are treatable and symptoms can be well controlled. For best results, the key is to aggressively treat both conditions.

What can I do to keep my chronic sinusitis under control?



There are a number of things that can aggravate a person's sinusitis, such as the weather, indoor temperatures and exposure to air pollutants. It is important to see a medical professional to officially diagnose your sinus problems to ensure that you don't have any other serious medical issues contributing to your symptoms.

However, once you get an official diagnosis from your doctor, there are a number of things you can do on your own to keep your chronic sinusitis under control.

Stop Smoking

We all know that smoking affects your lungs. What you may not realize is that smoking has a direct effect on your nose as well.

Your nose and sinuses contain membranes that constantly produce mucus as well as a layer of tiny hairs, called cilia, that protect you from breathing in airborne dirt and bacteria. Smoking can cause the cilia to stop doing their job, prompting mucus to collect in the back of your throat. As a result, bacteria multiply leaving you susceptible to further nasal congestion and infection.

If you are a smoker and need further support in quitting, there are a number of programs and products on the market that can help. Ask your physician for more information.

Nasal Irrigation

You may want to try rinsing your nose with a saline solution two times a day. This simple remedy has been done in many cultures around the world for thousands of years. Scientific evidence shows that nasal irrigation with saline is an effective treatment to manage chronic sinusitis. Not only does the water keep your sinuses moist, it washes away excess air pollutants and bacteria. You can purchase a special device called a neti pot or even a simple squeeze bottle to make the process of rinsing your nose a little easier.

Nasal irrigation involves simply pouring or squeezing a saline solution from one nostril into the other. This will help to thin the mucus, reduce swelling, and wash out germs, allergens or inflammatory cells from the nasal passages.

About Us

Metropolitan ENT & Facial Plastic Surgery is a group of board certified otolaryngologists with expertise in the field of ear, nose and throat disorders as well as surgical procedures of the head and neck and facial cosmetic surgery.

We offer state-of-the-art procedures and a wide range of services including sinus care, allergy management, audiology, treatment for snoring disorders and cosmetic surgical and non-surgical services.

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