

The Wellness Express™



Jump on the train to good health

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You May Not Have a Cold. You May Have Sinusitis!

Presented by:

Sinus infections – or sinusitis - affect about 35 million people in North America every year, and it accounts for more antibiotic prescriptions than any other health problem. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) reports that annual expenditures on sinusitis top nearly \$6 billion!

It is a costly health problem, but it is also one that can be tricky to diagnose. How can you tell if you have a common cold or sinusitis? In this issue of Wellness Express, we look at what defines sinusitis, its causes and treatments.

Sinusitis has symptoms that are similar to those of a common cold or allergies. In fact, you are more likely to develop sinusitis after contracting a cold. If it does not improve after seven days or actually worsens, then your cold may actually be a sinus infection.

Sinusitis is classified as either acute or chronic. An infection in the acute stage lasts up to eight weeks, while chronic is classified as any time beyond eight weeks. Regardless of classification, an infection in the sinuses causes inflammation, pressure and pain in the affected areas and can make daily life miserable.

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Symptoms include mucous discharge and blockage, headache, fever, facial and teeth pain, bad taste in the mouth, and coughing to expel mucous. Sinusitis may be the result of a virus, bacteria or fungus, and each may require a different medical treatment.

Although not a frequent occurrence, nasal growths (polyps) or a deviated septum may also increase the risk of sinusitis.

Home Treatment Options

You may help alleviate symptoms by implementing the following:

- Drink plenty of fluids. This will thin the mucous and reduce nasal blockage.
- Breathe steam – to keep nasal passages moist. Take a shower, bath or fill a bowl with hot water and inhale to get sufficient amounts of steam into your sinus cavities.
- Decongestant tablets and sprays can reduce nasal blockage and ease pressure. However, extended use of sprays for more than three days may actually cause rebound congestion. As an alternative, you can try saltwater nose drops to keep your nose clear.

Exercise of the Week

Alternating Oblique Crunches

Difficulty: Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)

Start: Lie on back with knees and hips bent to 90 degrees and feet elevated. Both hands should be behind head/neck with elbows out to sides.

Exercise: Keeping hands behind neck, curl forward so shoulders are just off floor. Then, bring right elbow across body to touch left knee. As left knee is brought up toward chest, straighten right leg. Pause, then bring left elbow across body to touch right knee, straightening left leg. Alternate sides for 10-15 repetitions per side.



• Over-the-counter pain medications can reduce aches and fever. You can also use a hot, wet towel or warm gel compress and apply to your face over the sinus areas for pain relief and pressure reduction. Leave the compress on the skin for ten minutes, and then repeat several times throughout the day.

Another natural solution to preventing and treating sinusitis is nasal cleansing, also known as nasal irrigation. The practice of cleaning the nasal passages to promote good health has long been a part of India's ancient ayurvedic medicine system. Cleansing this area of excess mucous not only keeps your nasal airway clear of proinflammatory substances, but it reduces the need for medication. A study on nasal irrigation using saline confirms it helps reduce symptoms and improves quality of life for sinusitis sufferers.¹

A common way of irrigating the nose is to use a neti pot, which has a long spout that you insert into the nose and let saline solution flow through the area. Neti pots and similar devices are available at many pharmacies and natural health stores.

Concerns About Antibiotics

If home treatments are not effective, you may need antibiotics. However, the use of antibiotics is not without controversy. Many medical experts claim antibiotics are prescribed too often for this condition - possibly because it is difficult to discern if sinusitis is caused by a virus, bacteria or fungus. Viral sinusitis can create

conditions that allow bacterial infections to develop. However, antibiotics are effective only against bacteria – not viruses or fungi. The overuse of these drugs can lead to antibiotic resistance and the creation of superbugs.

Some research also questions the value of antibiotics. In a sinusitis study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers noted that antibiotics and a topical steroid were no more effective at treating symptoms than a placebo. They remarked, "Our main conclusions are that among patients with the typical features of acute bacterial sinusitis, neither an antibiotic nor a topical steroid alone or in combination are effective in altering the symptom severity, the duration, or the natural history of the condition."²



Quote to Inspire

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

Anne Bradstreet

References and sources:

1. Efficacy of daily hypertonic saline nasal irrigation among patients with sinusitis: a randomized controlled trial - J Fam Pract. 2002 Dec;51(12):1049-55.
2. Antibiotics and Topical Nasal Steroid for Treatment of Acute Maxillary Sinusitis - JAMA 2007;298(21):2487-2496. doi: 10.1001/jama.298.21.2487.



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