



**ACUTE SINUSITIS OVERVIEW:** *Rhinosinusitis*, or more commonly *sinusitis*, is the medical term for inflammation of the lining of the sinuses and nose. The sinuses are the hollow areas within the facial bones that are connected to the nasal openings. The sinuses are lined with mucous membranes, similar to the inside of the nose.

There are two main types of sinusitis: acute and chronic. Acute sinusitis is inflammation that lasts for less than 4 weeks, subacute sinusitis lasts from 4 to 12 weeks, while chronic sinusitis lasts for more than 12 weeks. Acute sinusitis is common.

**ACUTE SINUSITIS:** The most common cause of acute sinusitis is a viral infection associated with the common cold. Bacterial sinusitis occurs much less commonly, in only 0.5 to 2 percent of cases, usually as a complication of viral sinusitis.

Because antibiotics are effective only against bacterial, and not viral, infections, most people with acute sinusitis do not need antibiotics. Additionally, most adults with normal immune systems can also clear bacterial infections without antibiotics.

#### COMMON SINUSITIS SYMPTOMS

#### MAY ALSO INCLUDE

Thick, Colored Nasal Drainage	Facial Pain	Persistent Fevers	Difficulty Smelling
Nasal Congestion	Facial Pressure	Fatigue	Ear pressure & Fullness
Nasal Blockage	Facial Fullness	Cough	Bad Breath

**VIRAL OR BACTERIAL SINUSITIS?** Duration of symptoms cannot always be used to distinguish between viral and bacterial sinusitis, even when lasting longer than 7 to 10 days. If your symptoms last **more** than 10 days, or if you have symptoms that initially improve but then worsen again within the first 7 days ("double-worsening"), you may have bacterial sinusitis, although 75% of people with bacterial sinusitis do improve in one month without antibiotics.

**TREATMENT** for sinusitis involves symptom relief and may or may not include antibiotic therapy. Whether the sinusitis is bacterial or viral, it can often improve with nonantibiotic treatment, although bacterial sinusitis can also worsen and require antibiotic treatment.

Initial treatment aims to relieve symptoms but **does not shorten the duration of illness**.

- **Pain relief (Tylenol, motrin, alieve)** with nonprescription pain medications are recommended.
- **Nasal irrigation (NetiPot, Bottle Spray)** can decrease pain associated with congestion and shorten the duration of symptoms. Flush the nose and sinuses with a saline solution several times per day.

- **Nasal steroids (Flonase, Nasocort)** can help to reduce swelling inside the nose, usually within two to three days. These drugs have few side effects and relieve symptoms in most people.
- **Nasal anticholinergics (Nasal Forte)** can be very effective in decreasing the symptom of runny nose and other related symptoms (eg, post-nasal drainage, sore throat). These sprays, like all medications, can interact with other medications. So, it is important that your complete medication list be reviewed by your physician before you take this medication.
- **Oral decongestants (pseudaphed)** may be helpful if you have associated symptoms of ear pain or fullness.
- **Nasal decongestant sprays (Afrin and Neo-Synephrine)** can be used to temporarily treat congestion. However, these sprays should not be used for more than two to three days due to the risk of rebound congestion (when the nose becomes congested constantly unless the medication is used repeatedly), possible addiction, and long-term consequences of frequent use, including persistent nasal dryness and crusting, which is very difficult to treat once it has developed.
- **Oral antihistamines (benadryl, zyrtec, claritin)** are not proven to improve symptoms of sinusitis and can have unwanted side effects.
- **Mucolytics (guaifenesin, Mucinex, Robitussin)** may help to clear mucus.

#### WHEN TO USE TELEMEDICINE?

- Symptoms persisting beyond 7-10 days
- Symptoms “double worsening” (they improve and then worsen again)
- Failed improvement with conservative treatment and over the counter medications for 5 days

#### WHEN TO BE EXAMINED IN PERSON? (even if symptoms have been present for less than seven days):

- Persistent high fever (>102°F)
- Sudden, severe pain in the face or head
- Double vision or difficulty seeing
- Confusion or difficulty thinking clearly
- Swelling or redness around one or both eyes
- Stiff neck