



## What You Need to Know

### What is sinusitis?

Sinusitis is inflammation of the sinuses. Most cases of sinusitis are caused by viruses. Other causes include:

- Allergies
- Exposure to smoke, dust or other irritants in the home, school or workplace
- Bacterial infection

### Do antibiotics help sinusitis?

Antibiotics only help sinusitis when it is caused by a bacterial infection. Because sinusitis is usually caused by a virus, antibiotics won't help most cases of sinusitis.

Taking antibiotics won't prevent a stuffy nose from turning into a bacterial sinus infection. In fact, taking unnecessary antibiotics puts your family at risk for developing resistant infections later.

### What about yellow or green mucus?

The color of mucus does not reliably predict whether or not you have a bacterial sinus infection or need antibiotics. It's normal for mucus to change color from clear to yellow, green or white when your body's immune system is fighting a virus.

## Sinus Treatment Guide for Parents

Antibiotics are rarely needed unless your child has one or more of the following:

- Pain or pressure on one side of the face
- Swelling around the eye area
- Postnasal drip (may cause dry cough)
- Symptoms have lasted 10 or more days

### Medical attention is recommended for:

- High fever (104°F or above)
- Fever that lasts more than 24 hours
- Symptoms that are severe or have lasted more than ten days.

### Otherwise:

If your child does not have a fever, and has only mild symptoms that have lasted less than 10 days, treat as a virus:

- Get lots of rest
- Avoid cigarette smoke
- Encourage sinus drainage by:
  - Offering plenty of fluids



# Sinus Infection Treatment Guide



- Breathing steam from a shower or bath
- Using non-medicated saline nose drops or spray several times a day
- Elevating the head of the child's bed
- Using warm facial packs for three to four times a day for 5-10 minutes

Acetaminophen (Tylenol or generic equivalent) may be taken for fever or pain. Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin or generic equivalent) may be given if your child is over 6 months. Ibuprofen should not be given if the child is dehydrated or vomiting continuously. Over-the-counter decongestants should not be given to children under the age of 3 years. Aspirin should never be used in children with fever due to the risk of stomach upset, intestinal bleeding and Reye syndrome.

## Adult Sinus Treatment Guide

Cough and runny nose by themselves are unlikely to be caused by a bacterial sinus infection unless those symptoms have been present for more than 10 days. Antibiotics are rarely required unless the following symptoms are present:

- Pain or pressure on one side of the face
- Swelling around the eye area
- Postnasal drip (may cause dry cough)
- Toothache in the upper jaw in the absence of dental problems

### **Medical attention is recommended for:**

- Typical symptoms of bacterial infection (see above) that are severe or have lasted more than ten days.
- Persistent fever

Otherwise...

If symptoms are mild or have lasted less than 10 days:

- Get lots of rest
- Avoid cigarette smoke
- Help your sinuses drain by:
  - Drinking plenty of fluids (try to avoid caffeine and alcohol)
  - Breathing steam from a shower or bath
  - Using non-medicated saline nose drops or spray several times a day
  - Elevating the head of your bed
  - Using warm facial packs for three to four times a day for 5-10 minutes
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol or generic equivalent) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin or generic equivalent) may be taken for fever or pain.

Over-the-counter decongestants like Sudafed or Benadryl may also be helpful.