

# Acute Sinusitis in Adults

This fact sheet helps you to know what is 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if you develop sinusitis which is an irritation and swelling of the sinuses. The fact sheet also tells you when you should become concerned and seek advice from a health professional.

## Could it be Coronavirus?

It is still important to be mindful about coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, which are the same for adults and children and can include the symptoms below. Many of these are similar to symptoms of illnesses such as colds and flu.

- A high temperature
- A new and continuous cough
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling tired, or exhausted
- A headache
- A sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhoea
- Feeling sick or being sick
- An aching body
- A blocked or runny nose

### You should consult the advice specific to your area in the UK:

*If you are in a high risk group, it is important that you read the appropriate sections and make contact with the recommended agencies if you have symptoms or queries.*

For advice on what to do if you have symptoms, testing and vaccination information, please visit:

- NHS England: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Northern Ireland NIDirect: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>
- NHS Inform for Scotland: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>
- NHS Wales 111: [https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/c/article/coronavirus\(covid19\)/](https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/c/article/coronavirus(covid19)/)

## Useful facts

**What are sinuses?** Sinuses are cavities in our face bones that open up into the nose, helping to control the water content and temperature of the air reaching our lungs.

**What is sinusitis?** The body's response to irritants or bugs (inflammation) can lead to sinusitis: a swelling and irritation of the lining of the sinuses. Viral infections, such as the common cold, can cause the lining of the nose to swell, blocking the small opening from the sinuses to the nose. Fluid inside the sinuses may build up, which can make you feel bunged up and stuffy.

**What types are there?** Sinusitis can be acute (resolving within 2 or 3 weeks) or chronic (which can last longer than 12 weeks).

**What are the symptoms?** The most common symptoms include a blocked or runny nose, pain and tenderness in the face, and a raised body temperature. Additional symptoms are headache, cough, pressure in your ears, feeling generally unwell, bad breath, tiredness, and reduced taste and smell.

**Will I need antibiotics?** The symptoms of sinusitis usually get better on their own without treatment. Antibiotics are unlikely to help unless the symptoms are severe (see over the page).

## What can I expect to happen?

**Duration:** The symptoms of acute sinusitis last longer than the common cold and should improve within 2 or 3 weeks. Chronic sinusitis can last for months.

**Need for treatment:** In most people, sinusitis will get better without treatment, and most people with sinusitis won't need to see their GP.

## What can I do myself to get better – now and in the future?

### Simple measures:

Rest, applying warm face packs and washing out the nose with a steady stream of saline solution (available from your pharmacy) may help relieve your symptoms.

### Fluids and food:

Drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost from sweating and a runny nose. Get some rest until you feel better – we usually know when we are well enough to return to normal activities. Eat healthily, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.

### Over the counter medicines:

Paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin can help reduce the symptoms of sinusitis. Avoid giving aspirin to children under the age of 16 and follow the manufacturer's instructions. A decongestant preparation for your nose (for a maximum of one week) can help if a blocked nose is the problem.

### Not recommended:

Complementary and alternative medicines, steam inhalation, and drugs such as antihistamines, mucolytics and steroids are currently not recommended.

## When to seek medical help

### Contact your GP surgery for urgent advice if you notice one or more of the following:

- If you develop a high temperature (above 39°C or 102.2°F), which can be a sign of a more serious type of infection
- You are confused or disorientated;
- You feel really unwell;
- You are at high risk of complications because you suffer other medical conditions;
- You suffer severe pain or discomfort in your face;
- Your nose produces lots of thick green/yellow fluid.

## Where can I find out more?

Remember a member of your pharmacy team can help in assessing symptoms and treatment options. Or visit:

NHS Website <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Sinusitis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Patient.co.uk <http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Sinusitis-Acute.htm>

NHS Inform Scotland <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/ears-nose-and-throat/sinusitis>

NHS111 Wales <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/Sinusitis/#Overview>

NHS NI Direct <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/sinusitis>