

# Patient Update

## Sinusitis common in winter

Sinusitis is an inflammation of one or more of the paranasal sinuses, the hollow cavities within the cheek bones found around the eyes and behind the nose. Sinusitis can be divided into acute, subacute, chronic and recurrent.

Sinusitis is very common in the winter and can last for months or years if inadequately treated. It can affect the nose, eyes or middle ear. Symptoms include some or all of the following:

- Plentiful, thick, colored nasal drainage
- Bad-tasting post-nasal drip
- Cough
- Head congestion and an accompanying headache
- Feeling of facial swelling
- Toothache
- Constant tiredness
- Occasional fever

Sinusitis is one of the most commonly diagnosed diseases in the United States, affecting an estimated 16% of the adult population annually, according to *The Diagnosis and Management of Sinusitis*, a Practice Parameter developed jointly by the American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) and the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (ACAAI) through the Joint Task Force on Practice Parameters. (Practice Parameters describe generally accepted practices, but are not intended to define a standard of care, nor should they be deemed inclusive of all proper methods of care or exclusive of other legitimate methods of care directed at obtaining the desired results.)

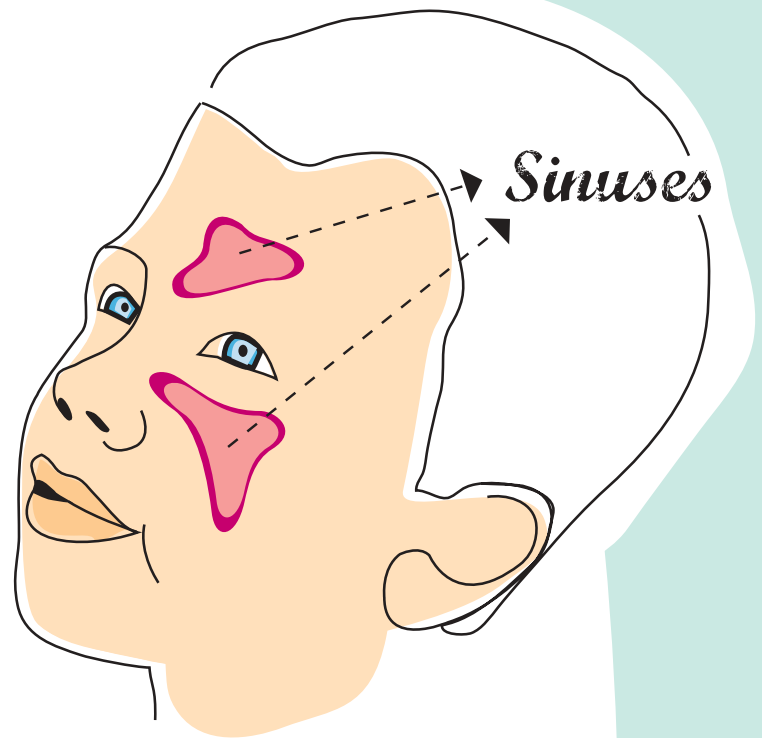
### Diagnosis

An allergist/immunologist diagnoses sinusitis based on a combination of clinical history, physical examination, imaging studies, and/or laboratory tests. Your allergist/immunologist can help you to manage your sinusitis and will determine if you have an allergic disease that is contributing to your condition. He/she will also determine what triggers your symptoms, as well as other triggers that may be causing sinus obstruction, and provide recommendations on how to treat this infection.

### Treatment

Treatments that can be helpful to control and reduce symptoms of sinusitis include:

- Breathing in hot, moist air
- Applying hot packs
- Washing the nasal cavities with salt water



- If symptoms persist, an antibiotic may be prescribed
- If all medical therapy has failed, surgery would be a consideration

An important aspect of sinusitis treatment, especially in the case of chronic sinusitis or recurrent acute sinusitis, is prevention. If you have conditions that lead to excess mucus and inflammation of the nose, such as allergic rhinitis (nasal allergies such as hay fever), or are in a profession that leads to a lot of viral upper respiratory infections (colds), such as teaching in a grade school, you are more likely to develop sinusitis. In addition, if there are structural abnormalities of the nose or sinuses, such as polyps, you are more likely to develop sinusitis.

Most people with chronic sinusitis or recurrent sinusitis have predisposing factors of some kind, so it is important to have a long-term treatment plan. This plan may include controlling allergies, keeping the nasal inflammation well controlled with medications between sinusitis episodes, and consideration of surgical repair of structural abnormalities, if present, after all other medical treatments have failed.

Allergist/immunologists are specialists trained in evaluating for all possible conditions related to sinusitis. These physicians use a management strategy to not only treat current infections, but to also provide management that lowers the risk for future sinus infections. Allergist/immunologists can also help to determine when surgery is indicated as part of the overall management.

If you have questions about sinusitis treatments, be sure to ask your allergist/immunologist for more information.

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