

# SINUS INFECTION (Sinusitis)

## TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

# 7.7

### DESCRIPTION

Inflammation of the sinuses (air-filled cavities) adjacent to the nose. They are located behind the eyebrows, inside each cheekbone and between the eyes.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Nasal congestion with green-yellow (sometimes blood-tinged) discharge
- Feeling of pressure inside the head
- Eye pain
- Headache that is worse in the morning or when bending forward
- Cheek pain that may resemble a toothache
- Post-nasal drip
- Cough (sometimes) that is usually non-productive
- Disturbed sleep (sometimes)
- Fever (sometimes)
- Swelling of the sinus opening, blocking normal discharge and increasing pain

### CAUSES

Infection (usually initiated by a cold or other upper-respiratory infection). The infection may be complicated by a bacterial invasion of organisms that normally inhabit the nose and throat. Irritation of the nasal passages from allergies. Fungal infection may occur in persons with a weakened immune system.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Common cold or other viral illness
- Smoking
- Immunosuppression due to illness or drugs
- Swimming in contaminated water
- People with asthma or allergies
- Persons with growths in the nose or a deviated septum

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Follow routine care of common cold recommendations

### EXPECTED OUTCOME

Will often clear up on its own, but may be treated with drugs or surgery, if needed.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Sinusitis may become chronic.
- Rarely, infection may spread into bones, eyes, or brain.

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms and recent illnesses, such as a cold. Diagnosis can usually be made based on this information. Medical tests may be done in certain cases, such as repeated infections.
- Drug treatment is aimed at improving symptoms and curing the infection.
- Apply moist heat to relieve pain in the sinuses and nose. Take a warm shower once or twice a day.
- Sinusitis not responding to drug treatment may require surgery to drain blocked sinuses.
- Surgery may be done for polyps or a deviated septum.
- Sinusitis caused by a fungus may require surgery.

### MEDICATION

- For stuffy nose, use nonprescription nasal decongestants. Limit use to 3 days in a row. Saline nasal sprays may be used several times a day. Nonprescription antihistamines are sometimes helpful.
- For minor pain, you may use drugs such as acetaminophen.
- Drugs to reduce congestion may be prescribed.
- Antibiotics for the infection may be prescribed.

### ACTIVITY & DIET

Resume your normal activities gradually. Exercise can help to clear your head. No special diet, but drink extra fluids to help thin secretions.

### NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF...

- Fever; bleeding from the nose; severe headache.
- Swelling of the face (forehead, eyes, side of the nose or cheek).

## Student Health Center



## WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC

This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

## 618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.