

## Sinusitis

### **What is Sinusitis?**

Sinus disease is often mistaken for a bad cold, however, unlike a cold, it may be caused by bacterial infections, viruses, or fungi and it often requires treatment with antibiotics. Sinusitis literally translates to inflammation of the sinuses. The sinuses are air filled cavities located behind the nose directly in front of the brain, on either side of the nasal bridge, behind the forehead and eyebrows, and within the bony structure of the cheeks. Normally, the sinuses are lined with a thin layer of mucus which traps dust, germs, and other particles. Hair-like projections in the sinuses then sweep mucus toward the back of the throat where it then slides down to the stomach.

In a person with sinus disease, this process of mucus flow is interrupted as the hair-like projections become blocked when infections or allergies cause the nasal tissue to swell, thus trapping the mucus in the sinuses.

### **Who is at Risk?**

People with weakened immune systems, allergies, asthma, or structural blockages in the nose of sinuses are more likely to suffer from sinusitis. Individuals who have deviated septums, nasal polyps, or narrowing of the sinus cavities are more likely to suffer from chronic sinus disease.

### **What are Symptoms of Sinusitis?**

Common symptoms of sinusitis include post nasal drainage, nasal congestion, tenderness of the face (particularly under the eyes or at the nasal bridge), frontal headaches, coughing, fever, fatigue, pain in the teeth, and discolored nasal discharge.

### **What Role do Allergies Play in Chronic Sinusitis?**

As a person with allergies becomes exposed to an allergen, their nasal and sinus passages become swollen in an attempt to remove it. This may be why a person with spring allergies also tends to suffer from sinusitis every spring.

### **How is Sinusitis Diagnosed/Treated?**

Your allergist will examine your throat, nose, and sinuses looking for signs of redness, swelling, tenderness, and nasal discharge. A sinus CT may be beneficial if you're suffering from a sinus disease which has lasted for longer than 8 weeks or if you have not responded to treatment with antibiotics.

Once your provider determines that sinusitis is the underlying issue, they can treat you accordingly. Antibiotics are the standard treatment for bacterial sinusitis, typically ranging from 3 to 28 days. The antibiotics work by attacking the bacteria which is causing your infection. You may require over the counter medication to provide temporary relief while the antibiotic is working to eliminate the cause. Some over the counter medications which can be beneficial include nasal sprays, antihistamines, nasal steroids, and nasal saline irrigation. If drug therapies fail, surgery may be beneficial in order to treat the structural blockage.