



Bayside Medical Group, Inc.

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FAMILY PRACTICE
SINUSITIS

Sinusitis: Prevention and Treatment

What are sinuses? The facial bones around our eyes and nose are hollow. They have little caves in them, with narrow entrances that connect into the back of the nose. Mucus membranes line their insides, much as our noses are lined.

What is sinusitis? Sinusitis is inflammation of the sinuses. It can be caused by infection (as in a cold), or allergy. The lining can swell, and that can be uncomfortable, but the worst sinusitis occurs when the exits to the sinuses get clogged up and mucus can't escape. It is this obstruction that is the main problem with sinusitis. A secondary complication that results from obstruction is infection—the mucus can't escape and germs make their way into the sinuses, and grow and flourish there.

What are the symptoms of sinusitis? A sufferer of sinusitis feels congested, and can have a headache, a feeling of facial pressure, a nasal voice, a post-nasal drip with a sore throat, and/or a fever from the infection.

How can you prevent sinusitis? *After your nose is congested* it's too late for decongestant or allergy pills; you need to take a different action. Since the main problem is that the exits of the sinuses are obstructed, you want to get them unobstructed. There are two types of nasal sprays you can use to do this. One is salt water—Ocean Spray is one brand name. This can be very helpful, and you can use it time after time with no side effects, until the sinusitis is all gone. The other spray is Afrin (or oxymetazoline). Afrin can be amazingly effective—but you have to be *very careful* using Afrin. You can use one to two sprays in each nostril every 12 hours, but *not more than 6 times in one week!* The problem with Afrin is “rebound”—when it wears off you become more congested again; you get dependent on it and it can stop working. So don't overuse it. Always use the salt-water spray before the Afrin. Used together these sprays can be very effective.

Another more vigorous approach to relieving the sinus obstruction is with *nasal lavage*. This consists of making a buffered salt-water solution and irrigating your nose with it. It sounds terrible and uncomfortable, but when you get used to it, it is not unpleasant at all—and it works really well. See the other side of this handout for instructions.

When do we treat with antibiotics? We strongly recommend that you not treat sinusitis with antibiotics without consulting us first. There are times to do it and times not to do it, and of course, you need a prescription for antibiotics. It is a hard decision sometimes, even for us, so we recommend that you let us help you decide.

Sinusitis can be a pain. We hope that these hints help you avoid sinusitis and treat it properly. If you are having a problem with it, make an appointment and we'll see if we can help.

We pledge not only to care for you, but to care about you.