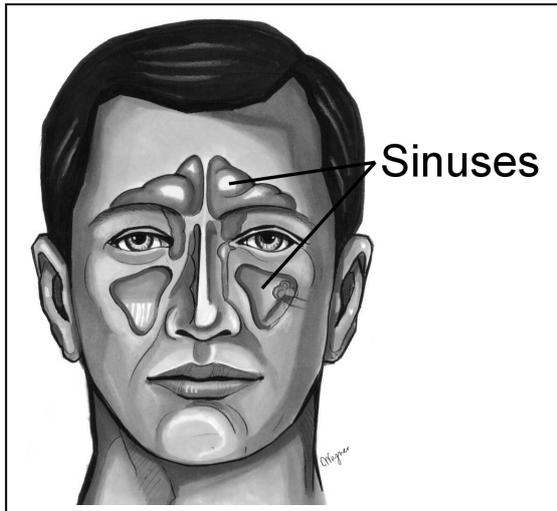


Medical treatment of the nose



Flow of air through the nose is limited by the bony/ cartilage structure of the nose and swelling on the lining of the nose (mucosa). Medical treatment will reduce swelling of the mucosa but cannot improve the structure of the nose. The *sinuses* are cavities around the nasal passages that normally make mucous and drain into the nose. During *sinusitis* (sinus inflammation and infection), the sinuses do not drain normally causing excessive mucous buildup and difficulty breathing through the nose. Swelling on the mucosa and

sinus openings can be made worse by airconditioning or heating, viral infections, irritants eg smoking, allergies (especially common with asthma), polyps or trauma.

During a sinus infection, your nose may feel blocked and you may feel swollen with pressure and pain around your eyes and face. Often this pain is also felt in the ears, throat and teeth. You may experience drainage from your nose which may lead you to have bad breath and cough at night. Frequently, sinusitis will impair the sense of smell. Sinusitis becomes *chronic* when it lasts more than 2 months.

Almost everybody has had a sinus infection and most are caused by viral infections and will improve by themselves. Initial treatment of swelling and sinusitis includes control of allergies and inflammation to improve the nasal airflow and drainage of the sinuses. Therapies include:

- saline spray- use saline wash (see below) three times a day
- nasal cortisone spray (eg rhinocort, nasonex) 1 spray each side daily for 6 weeks (Note that these sprays take approx 2 weeks of regular use to work and 6 weeks for maximal effect). Spray these directed toward the ear lobe on each side to avoid irritating the septum which can cause nose bleeds.
- antibiotics are recommended for infections lasting >7-10 days with high temperatures (>38.5 degrees Celsius) and discoloured (green) drainage
- antihistamines (try fexofenadine 180mg/ day if you prefer wakefulness in the morning or cetirizine 10mg/ day at night if you prefer light sedation) should work immediately and can be used as needed
- decongestants (sprays or tablets) should NOT be used beyond 3 days as they may cause worse nasal swelling and high blood pressure with prolonged use.

Initial evaluation for sinusitis includes nasal endoscopy (to look for polyps or rarely tumors), allergy testing and a CT scan. If infection is seen at endoscopy, a culture will be taken to determine which antibiotics are best. Do not use saline irrigation 24 hours before a CT scan (it may create an appearance similar to a sinus infection).

If medication and allergy treatment is unsuccessful, endoscopic sinus surgery may be an option. A thin endoscope and various instruments are used to remove any blockage and enlarge the natural sinuses openings. There are usually no external incisions and no external bruising or scarring. Occasionally a tiny incision is made in the eyebrow or under the lip to allow access to all sinuses. A *septoplasty and turbinate reduction* is frequently done to allow access to all sinuses and improve the

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nasal airway. Generally, nasal obstruction is significantly improved but surgery cannot cure allergies or prevent all infections.

SALINE IRRIGATIONS.

Saline irrigations should ideally be performed on both sides 3x/day. Purchase a Sinus Rinse (Neilmed®) starter pack or similar irrigating bottle that may be easily refilled from the chemist. Saline may be purchased or made at home using the following formula:

- 1 teaspoon non-iodized salt (sea salt or cooking salt)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 360mL water

Heat in microwave for 20-30 seconds (until comfortable to drip on hand).

Lean over sink or basin and gently place tip of bottle 1 cm into nostril.

While panting and tilting head over sink, instill ½ bottle into each nostril.

Gently blow nose without blocking nostrils.

Repeat if nose still feels crusted.

Wash bottle after each use with warm soapy water. Store in clean cup with tip down.

Once a week wash bottle with vinegar to prevent bacterial growth.

You may notice some dripping during the day when you tilt your head down.

Do not use saline 24 hours before a CT scan (it may cause an appearance like a sinus infection).



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