

Are you ready for sinusitis season?



Fall is here and while some people are enjoying the colorful leaves and the crisp fall air, approximately 31 million Americans are suffering through the beginning of sinusitis season.

Sinusitis is an inflammation of the nasal sinuses, which are hollow cavities within the cheek bones around the eyes and behind the nose. Their primary function is to warm, moisten and filter air in the nasal cavity. Sinusitis usually is caused by inadequate draining of the sinus cavities due to allergies, infection or obstruction.

There are two types of sinusitis, **acute sinusitis** and **chronic sinusitis**. In both forms, nasal congestion produces swelling in the sinus cavity, obstructing drainage and causing mucus to stagnate, providing a breeding ground for infection. Acute sinusitis, in most cases, is caused by a bacterial infection and usually develops as a complication five to 10 days after the first symptoms of a viral respiratory infection, such as the common cold. People with allergies are predisposed to acute sinusitis. Chronic sinusitis is a recurring condition which also may be caused by bacterial infection, but more often is a chronic inflammatory disorder similar to bronchial asthma.

A sinus infection often is treated with a combination of medications, such as an antibiotic

to control bacterial infection, and a nasal steroid to reduce swelling. For people with chronic sinusitis due to allergies, immunotherapy, or "allergy shots," may be prescribed to reduce their ongoing



chance of contracting the infection. Preventive measures, such as the use of nasal steroids or nasal

Common symptoms of sinusitis include :

- profuse, thick colored nasal drainage;
- bad tasting post-nasal drip;
- cough;
- head congestion/headache;
- a plugged up nose;
- a feeling of facial swelling;
- toothache;
- constant tiredness; and/or
- occasionally a fever.

saline irrigation during times of increased susceptibility, may help people with chronic sinusitis.

If you suspect you have sinusitis, consult an allergist/immunologist. To find an allergist/immunologist in your area or to find additional information on sinusitis, call the AAAAI's Physician Referral and Information Line at (800) 822-2762 or check out the *Tips to Remember* brochures located in the Patient/Public Resource Center of the AAAAI's Web site, www.aaaai.org.

To help alleviate sinusitis symptoms, allergists recommend:

- Taking your medications as prescribed. Do not take more medicine to alleviate severe symptoms. If you are prescribed antibiotics, finish all of the antibiotic.
- Breathing in steam.
- Using hot packs to alleviate facial pain.
- Increasing fluid intake.
- Using an over-the-counter sterile salt water nasal spray.



For more information on sinusitis, visit the "Associated Disease: Rhinosinusitis" section of the *Allergy Report* Online, at www.aaaai.org

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