

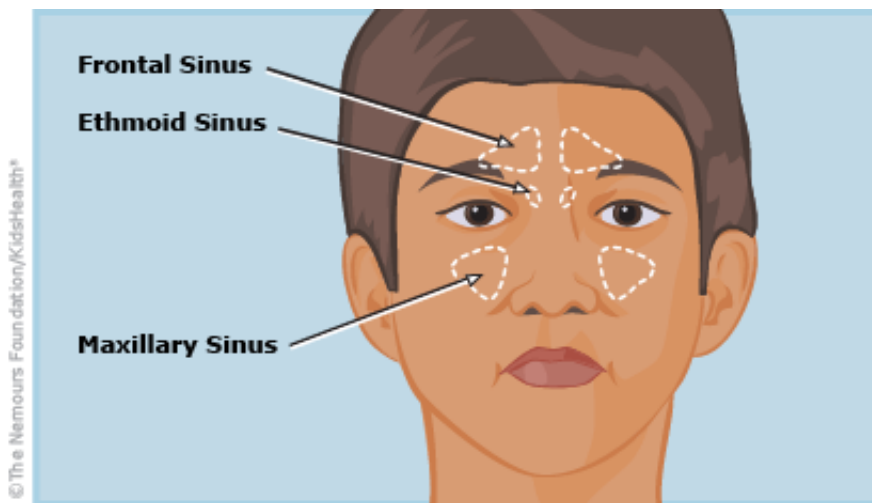
Partners in Pediatrics, PC
7110 Forest Ave
Suite 105
Richmond, VA 23226
804-377-7100

Sinusitis

Sinuses are moist air spaces within the bones of the face around the nose. When they become infected and swell or become irritated, this is called sinusitis (or a sinus infection). These infections usually follow colds or bouts with allergies. Sinusitis is common and easily treated.

Causes

The sinuses are four sets of hollow spaces that are located in the cheekbones (maxillary sinus), the forehead (frontal sinus), behind the nasal passages (ethmoid sinus), and deep in the brain behind the nasal passages (sphenoid sinus). Sinuses are lined with the same mucous membranes that line the nose and mouth.



When someone has a cold or allergies and the nasal passages become swollen and make more mucus, so do the sinus tissues. The drainage system for the sinuses can get blocked, and mucus can become trapped in the sinuses. Bacteria, viruses, and fungi can grow there and lead to sinusitis.

Symptoms

Sinusitis can cause different symptoms for kids of varying ages.

Younger kids often have cold-like symptoms, including a stuffy or runny nose and slight fever. If your child develops a fever 5-7 days after cold symptoms begin, it could signal sinusitis or another infection (like bronchitis, pneumonia, or an ear infection), so call your doctor.

Many parents mistake cold-related headaches in young kids for sinus infections. But the sinuses in the forehead don't start developing until kids are 6 or 7 years old and aren't formed enough to get infected until the early teen years. So headaches in kids who have colds usually aren't sinus infections.

In older kids and teens, the most common sinusitis symptoms are a cough that doesn't improve after the first 7 days of cold symptoms, fever, worsening congestion, foul breath, dental pain, ear pain, or tenderness in the face. Sometimes, teens who have sinusitis also develop upset stomachs, nausea, headaches, and pain behind the eyes.

Prevention

Simple changes in your lifestyle or home environment can help lower the risk of sinusitis. For example, during the winter, when your heating system makes the air inside your home abnormally dry, consider using a humidifier to keep home humidity at 45%-50%. This will stop dry air from irritating the sinuses and make them less of a target for infection. It's important to clean your humidifier regularly to prevent mold growth.

Although sinusitis itself is not contagious, it is often preceded by a cold, which can spread easily, particularly among family or friends. The most effective way to prevent spreading germs is to teach your family the importance of frequent hand washing, particularly when they're sick.

Treatment

Doctors may prescribe oral antibiotics to treat cases of sinusitis thought to be caused by bacteria. Some doctors may recommend decongestants and antihistamines to help ease symptoms.

Sinusitis caused by a virus usually goes away without medical treatment. Acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and/or warm compresses can help reduce any pain. But over-the-counter cold preparations have not been found to be effective in reducing symptoms and may cause unwanted side effects.

Call the doctor whenever your child has:

- a cold that lasts for more than 10 days without improvement
- a cold that seems to be getting worse after 7 days of symptoms
- symptoms of allergies that don't clear with the usual allergy medication

Also call the doctor if your child shows any other signs of sinusitis, like pain or stiffness in the cheeks, a fever, or a cold that seems worse than usual.

Reviewed by: Nicole A. Green, MD
Date reviewed: April 2013



© 1995-2013 The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth. All rights reserved.

Note: All information is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.