

## Do antibiotics help?

- Acute sinusitis is rarely caused by bacteria so an antibiotic is unlikely to help.
- Even for sinusitis which is caused by bacteria, we know the body's own defences can usually clear the infection. **8 out of 10 patients recover in 14 days** without antibiotics. It is common for symptoms to take **2-3 weeks** to go completely.
- If you have to contact your medical practice for advice, your doctor or nurse will need to examine you before deciding with you whether an antibiotic or another treatment is needed.
- Everyone needs to use antibiotics wisely. Using them too much, or when they are not needed, encourages bacteria to become resistant. This means in the future the antibiotic may no longer be effective against the bacteria.
- Antibiotics themselves can also cause side effects such as diarrhoea, skin rashes and stomach upsets.

# SINUSITIS?

Antibiotics are not the answer in most cases.

## SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you would like to find out more about self-treating common health problems ask your pharmacist, call the free healthline on 08085 202030 or email [healthpoint@nhs.net](mailto:healthpoint@nhs.net)

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WHEN YOU'RE ILL,  
KNOW WHO TO TURN TO.



## What is sinusitis?

Sinuses are small air-filled spaces in the bones of the face - the main ones are in the cheekbones and the forehead (just above the eyes).

The lining in them is very similar to the lining inside your nose. When the sinuses get irritated the sinus lining swells and produces fluid (mucus) in exactly the same way your nose does.

Unfortunately, the swelling in the sinuses often stops the mucus from draining away. This causes the air pressure in the sinuses to increase which then causes the pain that we refer to as sinusitis. Generally people with sinusitis have pain over the sinus areas plus all the symptoms of a cold e.g, blocked nose, headache, feeling tired.

Symptoms usually clear up within 1-2 weeks, however sometimes they can last for longer.

Colds and allergies are the main causes of sinusitis.

True sinusitis is uncommon in children.

## What can you do?

- Take a painkiller such as paracetamol, or ibuprofen regularly according to the dosage instructions. This will also help with other symptoms you may have such as headache, general aches and pains. Ibuprofen may not be suitable for everyone – check with your pharmacist before starting.
- Keeping hydrated will be helpful, so drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid smoking or being around those that are - this just causes more irritation to the nose lining.

## What if your child has symptoms of sinusitis – what can you do?

- In children the symptoms of sinusitis may include irritability, ear discomfort, snoring, mouth breathing, feeding difficulty and nasal speech.
- Give paracetamol, and follow the dosage instructions carefully.
- Make sure they drink plenty of fluids.
- Remember not to give aspirin to any child under 16 years.

## How can your community pharmacy help?

- Your pharmacy team can advise on which over the counter medicines would be best to help you manage your symptoms
- Your pharmacist can also check that any medication for your sinusitis does not interact with any medication you have been prescribed by your doctor.
- If your sinusitis is caused by allergy, your pharmacist may be able to advise on antihistamines to help prevent this happening again.

## When should you contact your medical practice for yourself, or your child?

Contact your medical practice if you or your child has:

- Fever, or pain in the forehead or around the eyes, which is getting worse
- Not become better after 5-7 days of treating the symptoms
- Redness or swelling of an eyelid or cheek.

**You should contact your medical practice urgently if you are concerned that you or your child may be seriously unwell.**