

# Health Tips

Your Good Health Information From eDocAmerica

with

Dr. D



Printer Friendly

## Reader Requested

### Health Tip: Sinus Infections, Part 2 - Chronic sinusitis

Two weeks ago we learned about the causes and treatment of acute sinusitis. When sinusitis lasts longer than 12 consecutive weeks, it's called chronic sinusitis. While most acute sinusitis tends to be due to infectious causes, a greater proportion of chronic sinusitis is related to non-infectious causes such as allergies and structural problems that obstruct the openings that drain the sinuses.

Chronic sinusitis affects anywhere from 30 million to 40 million Americans each year. As with acute sinusitis, chronic sinusitis begins with inflammation of the



mucous membranes in the sinuses. This eventually causes fluid to accumulate with plugging of the passages that normally allow the sinuses to drain. The primary symptoms associated with chronic sinusitis are facial pain, congestion, difficulty breathing through the nose, drainage of a thick, yellow or greenish discharge from the nose or down the back of the throat, headache, bad breath, nausea and sore throat. While many of these

symptoms are seen in acute sinusitis also, two major differences are that chronic sinusitis typically causes more severe fatigue and is less likely to produce fever.

**What causes chronic sinusitis?** Basically, anything that can plug the openings that drain the sinuses can cause chronic sinusitis. Allergies do it by causing swelling of the mucous membranes.



Infections, most commonly viruses, impede drainage when the mucous membranes become inflamed and thickened. Nasal polyps, small, benign growths in the nasal cavity, can obstruct the sinuses as can a deviated nasal septum. Molds and fungus are far more likely to be involved in the development of chronic sinusitis than in acute sinusitis. In the case of these organisms, some experts believe they trigger an

inflammatory response which then leads to swelling and blockage of sinus



**Click Here!**

...to email this Health Tip to a friend and invite them to enjoy a free subscription to...

**eDocAmerica's weekly Health Tip!**

eDocAmerica

Services Overview

[Click HERE...](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)



If you wish to [unsubscribe](#) from any eDocAmerica mailings, please click on the image above.

#### Register Now

If you have not yet used eDocAmerica to communicate with our physicians, we urge you to give it a try. Email us about this or any other topic or question you have!

drainage.

**How is chronic sinusitis diagnosed?** The diagnosis of acute sinusitis is primarily clinical, meaning the doctor relies primarily on the history and physical to determine if sinusitis is present. In confirming the presence of chronic



sinusitis, however, special testing is usually necessary. Nasal endoscopy is a procedure in which a thin, flexible tube with fiber optic lighting is directed into the sinus to directly visualize the mucous membranes within the sinus. Imaging studies such as a CT or MRI scans may reveal "impaction", or complete blockage, with fluid buildup within the sinus. When an infectious cause is suspected, cultures to determine the organism

responsible may be done. Skin testing may reveal the responsible allergen when sinusitis develops on an allergic basis.

**How is chronic sinusitis treated?** The treatment of chronic sinusitis hinges on the underlying cause. Since allergies are frequently implicated, taking oral antihistamines or using intranasal corticosteroids (Flonase, Beconase or Nasacort), usually helps. Allergy desensitization when there is a known allergic trigger may be beneficial also. One of the safest and most effective treatments for allergy-related chronic sinusitis is [nasal irrigation](#). This involves the use of a bulb syringe or [neti pot](#) to wash out the nasal cavity which helps to enhance drainage of mucous from the sinuses. When a bacterial infection is causing the sinusitis, taking an antibiotic may be necessary. Surgery may be required when there is a physical blockage such as a nasal polyp or a deviated nasal septum. Surgery may also be necessary to open up the drainage passages in cases of severe blockage, particularly if the sinusitis has not responded to simpler measures.

**What else can I do for my sinusitis?** First and foremost, don't smoke or expose yourself to smoke-filled environments. Drink plenty of fluids to help dilute your nasal secretions. Install a humidifier to keep the air in your home moist and clean. If environmental allergies are causing problems consider getting an indoor air filter, at least for the bedroom.

---

#### Have you ever used eDocAmerica?

To register, just [Click Here](#) and follow the simple directions. The entire process should take less than 5 minutes. You'll be glad you did.

**eDocAmerica**

11719 Hinson Road, Suite 130 Little Rock, Arkansas 72212

Toll Free 1-866-525-eDoc (3362) [www.eDocAmerica.com](http://www.eDocAmerica.com)

Copyright 1999-2008 eDocAmerica. All rights reserved. Patent Pending. [\[click here to unsubscribe\]](#)