

Sinus Infection - Bacterial

Definition

- A bacterial infection of one or more of the sinuses

Health Information

Symptoms

- Main symptoms are increased sinus pain and return of fever.
- Pain or pressure on the face over a sinus.
- Sinus pain occurs above the eyebrow, behind the eye, and under the cheekbone
- The skin around the eyelids or cheeks may become red or swollen.
- Other common symptoms are a stuffy or blocked nose.
- Thick yellow nasal discharge is common.
- Bad breath and mouth-breathing can also occur.

Diagnosis

- A doctor can diagnose bacterial sinusitis by reviewing the details of your symptoms.
- Tests or X-rays are not needed.

Cause

- Starts as a viral sinus infection. The sinuses normally drain into the nose. If a sinus opening becomes completely blocked, it can become infected with bacteria. This occurs in about 2% of colds.

Nasal Discharge with Bacterial Sinusitis

- The nasal discharge changes color during different stages of a cold. This is normal.
- It starts as a clear discharge and later becomes cloudy.
- Sometimes it becomes yellow or green colored for a few days. This is still normal for a cold.
- Thick, colored discharge points to bacterial sinusitis ONLY if it occurs with other symptoms. These are:
- Sinus pain (not just sinus congestion) OR
- Swelling or redness over any sinus OR
- Return of a fever after it has been gone for over 24 hours OR
- Thick nasal discharge and post-nasal drip lasts over 14 days without improvement.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Bacterial sinus infections occur in about 2% of colds.
- On an antibiotic, most children get better slowly over 2 to 3 days.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Antibiotic by Mouth:

- Bacterial sinus infections need a prescription for an antibiotic.
- The antibiotic will kill the bacteria that are causing the sinus infection.
- Give the drug as directed.
- Try not to forget any of the doses.
- Give the drug until it is gone. Reason: To stop the sinus infection from flaring up again.

3. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
 - Try saline first. Sometimes it alone relieves the pain. Reason: it removes dried mucus blocking the sinus opening and allows it to drain.
4. **Cold Pack:**
 - For severe pain or pressure, can try a cold pack. You can also use ice wrapped in a wet cloth.
 - Put it over the sinus for 20 minutes. Caution: Avoid frostbite.
5. **Fever:**
 - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
 - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
6. **Nasal Saline to Open a Blocked Nose:**
 - Use saline (salt water) nose drops or spray to loosen up the dried mucus. If you don't have saline, you can use a few drops of bottled water or clean tap water. Teens can just splash a little tap water in the nose and then blow.
 - STEP 1: Put 3 drops in each nostril.
 - STEP 2: Blow each nostril out while closing off the other nostril.
 - STEP 3: Repeat nose drops and blowing until the discharge is clear.
 - How often: Do nasal saline when your child can't breathe through the nose.
 - Saline nose drops or spray can be bought in any drugstore. No prescription is needed.
 - Saline nose drops can also be made at home. Use 1/2 teaspoon (2 ml) of table salt. Stir the salt into 1 cup (8 ounces or 240 ml) of water. You must use bottled or boiled water for this purpose.
 - Reason for nose drops: Blowing alone can't remove dried or sticky mucus.
 - Other option. Use a warm shower to loosen mucus. Breathe in moist air, then blow each nostril.
7. **Fluids:**
 - Try to get your child to drink lots of fluids.
 - Goal: Keep your child well hydrated.
 - It will thin out the mucus discharge from the nose. Also, it loosens up any phlegm in the lungs.
8. **Humidifier:**
 - If the air in your home is dry, use a humidifier. Reason: Dry air makes nasal mucus thicker.
9. **Decongestant Nose Spray (No prescription needed) for Teens:**
 - Use this only if the sinus still seems blocked up after nasal washes. Also, only use for age 12 years or older. Use the long-acting type such as Afrin.
 - Dose: 1 spray on each side. Do this 2 times per day.
 - Always clean out the nose before using.
 - Use for 1 day. After that, use only for symptoms.
 - Don't use for more than 3 days. (Reason: Can cause rebound congestion).
 - Oral decongestants (such as Sudafed) are not advised in children.
10. **What to Expect:**
 - Once on antibiotics, your child will get better in 2 or 3 days.
 - The fever should be gone by 2 days (48 hours).
 - The sinus pain should be better by 2 days. It should be gone by 3 days (72 hours).
11. **Return to School:**
 - Your child can return to school after the fever is gone.
 - Your child should feel well enough to join in normal activities.
 - Sinus infections cannot be spread to others.

Call Your Doctor If

- Fever lasts more than 2 days after starting antibiotics
- Sinus pain lasts more than 3 days after starting antibiotics
- Sinus and nose congestion lasts more than 2 weeks
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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