

Sinus Infection - Viral

Definition

- A viral infection of the sinuses
- A normal part of the common cold

Health Information

Symptoms

- Fullness or pressure on the face over a sinus. Pain is usually mild.
- Sinus pressure occurs above the eyebrow, behind the eye, and under the cheekbone
- Other common symptoms are a stuffy or blocked nose or nasal discharge.
- Your child may also have a nasal drip down the back of the throat. This is called a postnasal drip.
- Also, may have a sore throat and throat clearing from postnasal drip.

Diagnosis

- A doctor can diagnose viral sinusitis by reviewing the details of your symptoms. Tests are not needed.

Cause

- Caused by the many viruses that cause the common cold.
- A cold infects the lining of the nose. It also infects the lining of all the sinuses.
- The sinuses normally drain into the nose. If a sinus opening becomes blocked, it can cause pressure.
- Viral sinusitis is much more common than bacterial sinusitis.

Color of Nasal Discharge with Colds

- 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.
- Colored discharge is common after sleep, with allergy medicines or with low humidity. (Reason: All of these events decrease the amount of normal nasal secretions.)

Prevention

- Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often. After coughing or sneezing are important times.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Sinus congestion is a normal part of a cold. It should clear up on its own.
- Usually, nasal washes can prevent a bacterial sinus infection.
- Antibiotics are not helpful for the sinus congestion that occurs with colds.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Fluids:**
 - Try to get your child to drink lots of fluids.
 - Goal: Keep your child well hydrated.
 - It also will thin out the mucus discharge from the nose.
 - It also loosens up any phlegm in the lungs. Then it's easier to cough up.
3. **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. Then, do the other side.
 - 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 the moist air, then blow each nostril.
4. **Humidifier:**
 - If the air in your home is dry, use a humidifier. Reason: Dry air makes nasal mucus thicker.
5. **Decongestant Nose Spray (No prescription needed):**
 - 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 with saline 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 for children.
6. **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.
7. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
 - Try nasal saline first. Sometimes it alone relieves the pain. Reason: it removes dried mucus blocking the sinus opening and allows it to drain.
8. **What to Expect:**
 - With this advice, the viral sinus blockage goes away in 7 to 14 days.
 - The main risk is a sinus infection from bacteria. This can occur if bacteria multiply within a blocked sinus. This leads to a fever and increased pain.
 - A bacterial sinus infection will need antibiotics. Once on treatment, the symptoms will improve in a few days.
9. **Return to School:**
 - Sinus infections cannot be spread to others.
 - Your child can return to school after the fever is gone.
 - Your child should feel well enough to join in normal activities.

Call Your Doctor If

- Sinus pain lasts more than 24 hours after starting treatment
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- 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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