Sinusitis in adults

This fact sheet helps you to know what’s ‘normal’ and what you can expect to happen if you get sinusitis.

It also tells you when you should become worried and see your doctor.

What are sinuses?
Sinuses are small spaces in our face bones that open up into the nose.

They help to control the water and temperature of the air reaching our lungs.
What is sinusitis?
Sinusitis is when the lining of the sinuses swell up.

They do this because you are allergic to something or there is a bug.

Bugs like the common cold can cause the lining of the nose to swell and block the small opening to the sinuses.

This can make you feel bunged up and stuffy.

What types are there?
Sinusitis can be:

- **Acute** - getting better within 12 weeks
- **Chronic** - lasting longer than 12 weeks
What happens?
You will probably get:

- A blocked or runny nose

- Pain and tenderness in the face

- A raised temperature

You may also get a:

- Headache

- Cough

- Pressure in your ears
• Feeling generally unwell

• Bad breath

• Tiredness

• Reduced taste and smell

**Will I need antibiotics?**

Sinusitis will usually get better on their own without treatment.

Antibiotics are unlikely to help unless it gets worse.
What should happen?

It will last longer than the common cold and take about 2 ½ weeks to clear.

Chronic sinusitis may last for months.

In most people, sinusitis will get better without treatment.

Most people with sinusitis won’t need to see their local doctor (GP).
What can I do myself to help?

Some easy things:

- Rest
- Applying warm face packs
- Washing out your nose with a **saline solution** which you can get from your pharmacy

A **saline solution** is a salty liquid which helps to get rid of infections and disease.

Drink and eat:

Drink plenty of liquid.

Get some rest until you feel better.

Eat healthily, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
Over the counter medicines:
Paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin can help reduce the symptoms of sinusitis.

Don’t give aspirin to children under the age of 16. Follow the instructions.

If your nose is blocked, a decongestant can help.

A decongestant is a medicine which helps to clear a blocked nose.

Not recommended

Breathing in steam is not recommended.

We don’t think that it works.
When should I seek medical help?

Contact your local doctor’s (GP) surgery for urgent advice if you notice any of these:

- You get a high temperature (above 39°C or 102.2°F)
- You are confused or disorientated
- You feel really unwell
- You have other medical conditions that might be affected
- You suffer severe pain in your face
- Your nose produces lots of thick green/yellow fluid
Where can I find out more?

NHS Choices

Web: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Sinusitis/Pages/Introduction.aspx

Remember that your pharmacist can also help you.