

Treatment for sinusitis

Sinusitis is an infection of the small spaces in the skull behind the eyes and nose. Acute sinusitis is very common and can often develop after a cold or flu. It usually clears up on its own without any treatment. You have two sinuses on your forehead, two either side of the bridge of your nose and two behind your cheekbones. It is the last two that are usually affected by sinusitis.

What are the symptoms of sinusitis?

You can often experience;

- High temperature
- Blocked or runny nose
- Pain and tenderness over infected sinus. This is often a throbbing pain which becomes worse when you move your head.

It is possible that you may also experience other symptoms which include;

- Cough
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Pressure in your ears
- Loss of taste and smell
- Feeling of being generally unwell

What causes sinusitis?

The most common cause of sinusitis is a cold or flu. Sometimes bacteria can get in after a cold and cause the infection.

There are additional factors that make people more open to infection. These include;

- Smoking
- Asthma and allergies
- Weakened immune system

Do I need antibiotics?

Sinusitis is usually caused by a virus and most people will not need antibiotic treatment. The immune system will usually clear the sinusitis within a week.

What treatment should I take?

Pain killers like paracetamol or ibuprofen can be used to relieve headache, high temperature or any pain/tenderness in the affected area.

Decongestant nasal sprays or drops can be bought from pharmacies. They will relieve a blocked nose but shouldn't be used for more than 5-7 days. Some people find steam inhalation helpful to relieve nasal blockages. There is a debate about how effective this is and there is a risk of scalding.

When should I come back and see the doctor?

If the symptoms last for longer than 1 week you will need to see your doctor. You may need antibiotics to clear the infection. Also, if you have repeated bouts of sinusitis you will need to see the doctor.

We thank the doctors at Bishops Castle Medical Practice who created the original version of this leaflet