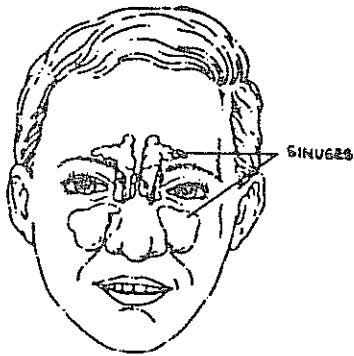


# Sinusitis - Allergic and Infectious

## What Is It?

The sinuses are hollow air spaces which lie on each side of the nose and below the eyes. They are lined with the same moist coating that lines the nose. When this lining becomes irritated, we call the problem sinusitis (*sinus* = space with moist lining, *itis* = irritation). The irritation can be from an allergy or from an infection. When the irritation begins, you may have post nasal drip, a stuffy head, and runny nose. Headaches may also occur.



Each sinus cavity has a small opening into the back of the nose. These are there so that air and mucus can pass through. When this opening gets blocked, a so-

called "vacuum" or "pressure" headache may occur.

## What Causes It?

Sinusitis may occur with any condition of the nose or sinuses which interferes with the normal passage of air and draining of mucus from the sinus cavities. In most cases, infection is the main cause. Sometimes allergy is the cause, and most of the time this is from allergic rhinitis (irritation of the nose caused by

allergies).

## What Usually Happens?

If there are no problems, allergic sinusitis is a troublemaker only during the season when your allergic rhinitis is worse. Infectious sinusitis may clear up on its own. On the other hand, it may become chronic and cause problems for months until treated.

## What Problems May Occur?

If a sinus infection becomes chronic it can cause severe nasal congestion. Sometimes it can cause growths called polyps to grow in the nose. Surgery is the only way to get rid of polyps.

## What Makes It Worse?

The same things which make your nasal allergy symptoms worse will increase your allergic sinusitis. With infectious sinusitis, heavy exercise, weather and temperature factors, and a "bad cold" may all make it worse.

## What Happens When It Is Treated?

As your allergies are treated and get better, so will your sinusitis. Often, x-rays are needed in order to correctly diagnose the problem. If it is the infectious type, it may require surgery before getting better.

## What Can I Do To Help?

Avoid the things which make your allergies worse, and follow your doctor's advice about medication.