
WHAT ARE THE SINUSES?

Sinuses are hollow spaces in the bones around the nose that connect to the nose through small, narrow channels. The sinuses stay healthy when the channels are open, which allows air from the nose to enter the sinuses and mucus made in the sinuses to drain into the nose.

WHAT IS SINUSITIS?

Sinusitis, also called rhinosinusitis, affects about 1 in 8 adults annually and generally occurs when viruses or bacteria infect the sinuses (often during a cold) and begin to multiply. Part of the body's reaction to the infection causes the sinus lining to swell, blocking the channels that drain the sinuses. This causes mucus and pus to fill up the nose and sinus cavities.

HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE ACUTE SINUSITIS?

You have acute sinusitis when there has been up to 4 weeks of cloudy or colored (not clear) drainage from the nose plus one or both of the following:

- a. A stuffy, congested, or blocked nose or
- b. Pain, pressure or fullness in the face, head, or around the eyes.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY SINUSITIS IS CAUSED BY VIRUSES OR BACTERIA?

Acute *viral* sinusitis is likely if you have been sick less than 10 days and are not getting worse.

Acute *bacterial* sinusitis is likely when you do not improve at all within 10 days of getting sick or when you get worse within 10 days after beginning to get better.

WHAT IS RECURRENT ACUTE RHINOSINUSITIS?

Recurrent acute rhinosinusitis is when patients have multiple episodes of acute viral or bacterial sinusitis, but generally return to a healthy baseline without symptoms in between episodes.

WHAT IS CHRONIC RHINOSINUSITIS?

Chronic rhinosinusitis is when you have inflammation of the sinuses with symptoms lasting more than 12 weeks. Patients may have acute flare-ups, but still have symptoms of nasal blockage, purulent drainage and pain even in between infections.

WHAT OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE RELATED?

Patients may be more likely to experience acute or chronic rhinosinusitis if they have a weak immune system, aspirin sensitivity, asthma, cystic fibrosis, or ciliary dyskinesia.

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ABOUT THE AAO-HNS/F

The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) represents approximately 13,000 specialists worldwide who treat the ear, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The AAO-HNS Foundation works to advance the art, science, and ethical practice of otolaryngology-head and neck surgery through education, research, and quality measurement.