

## Is it ALLERGIES or something more serious?

When to worry?

- progression to facial pain
- fever
- severe cough
- ear or throat discomfort
- tooth pain

The sinuses are air-conditioning spaces in the front of the skull and in the bones of the face. They are located to either side of the nose (maxillary), behind and in between the eyes (ethmoid), in the forehead (frontal) and there is one much further back in the head (sphenoid). They are hollow and lined with a moisture-producing mucous membrane and cilia. The fine hair like projections (cilia) also line the sinuses and move mucus towards a tiny 1/6" hole call the ostium for drainage. The weight of the skull is reduced and resonance to the voice is increased because of the sinuses. The air that we breathe is moisturized and humidified by the sinuses.

The moisture which can amount to a quart or more per day, normally drains from the sinuses into the back of the nose and down the throat. Sinusitis often follows after a cold. If someone has one cold after another or one continuous cold they may be suffering from a chronic sinus infection which is triggered from time to time by chilling, swimming, fatigue, weather changes, or contact with allergens.

With the development of a sinus infection the cilia are unable to move the mucus out and it becomes thicker and bacteria begins to multiply. Penicillin, erythromycin and tetracycline may not be totally successful. Newer more expensive antibiotics may need to be tried.

Antibiotics are carried through the blood stream. Remember that the sinuses are lined with one small blood vessel and it is difficult to penetrate the mucus. Treatment optimally lasts two weeks. Decongestants aid in decreasing the thickness of the mucus.

Antihistamines are rarely used unless the sinus infection is caused by allergies because antihistamines are drying. The mucus may get dried out and is plastered up against the wall of the sinuses and the bacteria is trapped inside the sinuses with no where to go. Then the bacteria reproduces and the ostium is blocked and thus remains inside the sinuses.

So the take home message is: take all of your antibiotics, use a vaporizer, drink a minimum of eight glasses of water (15-20 would be best) to thin the mucus. No alcohol as it may cause you to become dehydrated and thickens the mucus, stay away from tobacco smoke, auto exhaust, gasoline fumes, paint fumes, perfume, roach spray and household chemicals such as bleach...and REST, REST, REST.

(Submitted by Carol and Doug Ladle, Wellness Committee)