

Acute Sinusitis

Symptoms of Acute Sinusitis may include:

- ▶ Runny nose – a thick, purulent, coloured discharge.
- ▶ Blocked nose or congestion.
- ▶ Pain and tenderness – may be localised over the infected sinus, or it may affect teeth (making chewing painful), the upper jaw, or other areas such as the eyes, side of face or forehead. The pain may be throbbing and get worse when you bend your head forward.
- ▶ High temperature – fever may develop and you may feel generally unwell.
- ▶ In children, runny nose is the most common symptom. Facial pain is less common.

Acute sinusitis means that the infection develops quickly over a few days and lasts about a week, but it is not unusual for it to last 2-3 weeks. Many people will have some degree of sinusitis with a cold.

Do I need an antibiotic?

Most cases of acute sinusitis are caused by a viral infection.

Antibiotics **DO NOT** kill viruses.

So you **DO NOT** need an antibiotic for most cases of acute sinusitis.

In people who are normally well, your own immune system will usually clear the infection, even if the infection is caused by bacteria. Antibiotics are only sometimes needed.

Antibiotics may cause side-effects such as thrush, diarrhoea, rash and stomach upsets, so they should not be taken unnecessarily. Unnecessary use of some antibiotics has caused them to become less effective.

Treatment for Acute Sinusitis

Treatment options to relieve symptoms whilst waiting for your immune system to clear the infection.

No treatment	Acute sinusitis may be mild and will usually get better soon without any treatment.
Pain & fever relief	Take paracetamol or ibuprofen regularly. Do not take any more than the recommended dose.
Warm face packs	Held over the sinuses may help to ease pain.
Fluids	Drink plenty of fluids such as water and fruit-juices to avoid dehydration.
Steam inhalation	Inhaling steam from a shower may help clear a stuffed up nose. This may be helpful before bedtime. Care should be taken to avoid any risk of scalding.
Over-the-counter medicines	Ask your community pharmacist for advice.

What if the symptoms change?

Contact a doctor:

- ▶ If symptoms **do not start to ease** within a week (although it may take 2-3 weeks for symptoms to go completely).
- ▶ If you suspect that a complication is developing.
- ▶ Severe pain or swelling at the front of your head, swelling around the eye, swelling of the face or bloodstained discharge coming from the nose.
- ▶ If you have recurring bouts of sinusitis, as this may indicate an underlying problem.