

SINUSITIS and RHINITIS

The sinus cavities are air pockets inside the bones of the skull and face. They communicate with the nasal passage via small openings that can easily get plugged with mucus, pus, or swollen tissue. Sinusitis is inflammation and/or infection of the sinus cavities. It can be acute, which is typically less than 4 weeks. Or it may become chronic, lasting more than 12 weeks and often not responding to medications.

Symptoms

Sinusitis is characterized by pressure or pain in the face, teeth, eyes, and head region. It may be accompanied by green or yellowish drainage. If the drainage travels down the back of the throat then it may cause sore throat, hoarseness and coughing. It can lead to ear infections with reduced hearing and/or impaired balance

Diagnosis

Acute sinusitis is usually diagnosed clinically based on the symptoms and their duration. For prolonged infections imaging (CT scan) may be ordered. In the clinic, a small scope can be placed in the nose to view the openings. If the sinuses are draining this can be cultured to determine which bacteria are involved so that the appropriate antibiotics can be chosen.

Treatment

Sinusitis is initially treated by nasal saline rinses to promote drainage and clearing of the debris. Steroids as well as antibiotics may also be used if appropriate.

When medications fail, then surgery may be needed. This has traditionally been done in the operating room with scopes and tools to remove the infected tissue. Many times, it can now be done in the clinic using techniques to dilate the openings and wash out the sinuses. This is called Balloon Sinuplasty and can even be done in the office with topical anesthesia only, much like going to the dentist.

If traditional surgery is needed, our state of the art outpatient operating rooms are equipped with video and navigation equipment to allow us to precisely address the problem areas and spare as much normal tissue as possible with very little risk. You can think of it as a GPS for the nose and sinuses.

An examination by experienced doctors is the first step in treatment. At the Nashville ENT and Allergy Clinic, our board certified otolaryngologists, allergists, and pulmonologists work as a team to quickly and accurately determine the cause and start therapy for your sinus problem. The latest in video endoscopic tools are used to painlessly visualize the nasal passages. When indicated, CT scans are obtained and reviewed with you during your appointment.