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Greenville Ear, Nose & Throat

## Treating Sinus Infections with Medication

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Sinus infections can become chronic for many reasons, but you can do things to improve your recovery. Here are four treatments involving medicines to consider—not all of these treatments will be right for everyone. If medical therapy does not work, surgery may be needed after the appropriate CT scans are completed.

### Antibiotics

Antibiotics are commonly used to treat sinus infections. However, to get rid of the disease completely may require a long course of treatment, usually at least 10 days up to multiple weeks.

If much drainage continues despite using antibiotics, please see us again for a culture. You may have developed an infection resulting from a resistant strain of bacteria.

Also, be sure to take a probiotic or eat yogurt with active cultures to help prevent diarrhea, which often occurs when using strong antibiotics. It is possible to develop serious antibiotic-related diarrheal illnesses, so please let your healthcare provider know if you are having severe diarrhea.

### Saline Irrigation

Saline irrigation helps rinse away some of the material that obstructs your nose so that the infection can drain better. In an acute infection, perform saline irrigations 2 times a day. (See the separate handout for instructions on irrigation.)

If you use Afrin (only during an infection—see below), spray it in your nose 10 minutes before irrigation. Doing so will allow your nose to open a bit and become less congested before rinsing.

### Afrin

This over-the-counter medicine may be used for brief durations (3-4 days) during an acute infection. It works by causing vasoconstriction in the nose, which means that it will help your nose feel more open and may help with irrigation.

**Warning:** If you use the medicine for longer than 3-4 days, you will become addicted to it. As a result, your nose will actually become MORE congested overall from what is called “rebound vasoconstriction.” Please do not use this medication longer than 3-4 days!

### Nasal Steroids

Steroids can reduce inflammation during an acute infection. Taking steroids can help the ostea leading to the sinuses to open, allowing for better drainage.

Using nasal steroids often is helpful in treating sinus infections. Studies have shown that nasal steroids do not cause many of the side effects associated with oral steroids. However, nasal irritation may occur.

### Disclaimer Note

Any medication has side effects and warnings associated with its use. This sheet is not intended to replace the warnings or package information provided to you with your prescription, only to supplement it and address common concerns people often have about treating sinusitis.

The above information is not meant to be an exhaustive list of sinusitis therapies. Anatomical issues may require surgery for refractory sinusitis. Please discuss any concerns with your doctor.

Please call our office if you have questions about this information:

- Patewood (864) 454-4368
- Greer (864) 797-9400