

ARE YOU FEELING THE PRESSURE?

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In recent times, one can't really trust the temperatures outside as a good indication that the season is busy changing, but the one thing that is a dead giveaway are the snotty noses, tissue-filled dustbins and postnasal drips.

Yes, sinusitis season is upon us once again (and for some it's never really ended).

WHAT IS SINUSITIS EXACTLY?

Sinusitis is defined as the inflammation of the nasal cavity and the paranasal sinuses, especially the linings of the sinuses. The purpose of the linings is to heat and moisten the air before it enters your lungs. The most common symptoms of sinusitis are nasal congestion accompanied by facial pain¹.

According to the Merck Manual of Medical Information, sinusitis can be

caused by an allergy, or a viral, bacterial or fungal infection².

WHY DO SEASONAL CHANGES AFFECT MY SINUSES?

During the change of the seasons (spring and autumn) there is an increase in the number of irritants in the air which can aggravate the linings of the sinuses. In winter, the air is colder and drier, increasing the amount of mucus secreted to moisten and heat the air.

TO USE ANTIBIOTICS OR NOT?

Very often, it is virtually impossible to distinguish between viral and bacterial

sinusitis. Antibiotics are only indicated and effective against bacterial infections and, if overused, lead to the development of resistant bacteria. With sinusitis, the bacterial infection usually develops within the environment created firstly by the virus called viral rhinosinusitis (VSR).

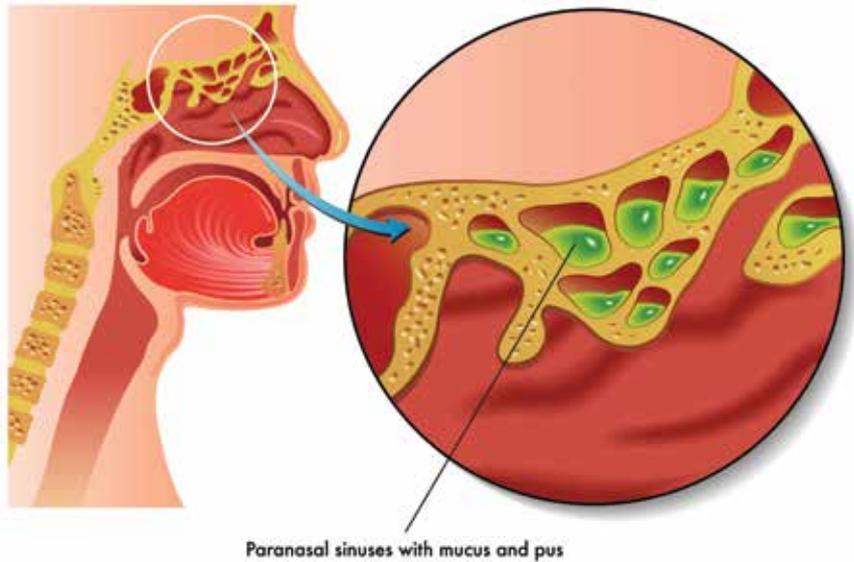
It is currently accepted to diagnose a patient with bacterial sinusitis only if they have not improved after 10 days of symptoms or the condition has become much worse within the first 5 - 7 days. The diagnosis dilemma leads to bacterial sinusitis being diagnosed far too often³. Antibiotics should be your last resort.

SO, WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN PROVEN TO HELP?

Physiotherapy has a part to play. As physiotherapists, we use manual therapy and electrotherapy to address sinusitis. Our main aim is to improve



Sinusitis



drainage and reduce inflammation, and we treat the condition symptomatically.

Some modalities that we use include:

ULTRASOUND. Research shows that 76,7% of patients treated with continuous ultrasound experienced improvements in rhinosinusitis symptoms. Furthermore, 72% of patients did not experience any symptoms one month after treatment with continuous ultrasound⁴.

LOW-LEVEL LASER THERAPY: Low-level laser therapy has been shown to improve overall symptoms of chronic rhinosinusitis by 46,34% after 4 weeks of treatment. This improvement was sustained in these patients for 5 months after the treatment was stopped⁵.

NASAL SALINE IRRIGATION: 72% of participants in a study done on NSI reported fewer sinus infections after the use of nasal saline irrigation. It has been shown to be very effective in chronic rhinosinusitis by improving quality of life, decreasing the intensity of sinus symptoms and decreasing the use of nasal sprays and antibiotics⁶.

WHAT SHOULD I NOT DO?

Do not use medication that 'relieves the symptoms' as these medicines contain pseudo-ephedrine which gives temporary relief but tends to thicken the secretions. It's better to use a mucolytic which thins the mucus and improves drainage.

WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME?

- Get enough rest and sleep.
- Remember to eat – your body needs fuel to heal.
- Nasal hygiene – use a saline nasal rinse as part of a daily routine.
- Get some sun on your body – this helps support the immune system.
- Use a humidifier – dry air leads to an increase in mucus production.



The bottom line - sinusitis, treated correctly, can be overcome!

References:

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