

How To



Clear Your Sinus Problems For Good

By Dr Michelle Alpert

Many patients have come to me with recurrent sinus infections that won't seem to go away. This chronic sinusitis makes it hard to breathe, especially at night and can cause painful, throbbing headaches, pressure in the head, balance problems, and a general feeling of malaise. Having taken repeated courses of antibiotics with only temporary relief, they wonder if they have some super bug in their sinuses, and whether they should opt for sinus surgery or even more powerful antibiotics.

The problem lies with the doctor, not the patient. The physician is not considering all the possible underlying triggers and contributors to the sinusitis. Chronic sinus problems are like a rain barrel that has overflowed. The foremost triggers are allergies. A good inventory of your home and office environment is very important. Have you checked for sources of mold? You may need to do remediation on any walls, especially in bathrooms, that might be carrying mold under the surface, and put mold plates out in your home and have them analyzed. If there have been leaks and floods in the past, moisture test your wall with an appropriate testing device. A dehumidifier can do much to keep airborne molds in check. Just as important are carpets carrying dust, and pet allergies.

One patient was about to undergo surgery for a deviated septum as her sinuses were chronically stuffed and her snoring disturbed her boyfriend. However, on vacations her symptoms seemed to abate. It turned out that she suffered from cat allergies, and her cat slept curled around her head on the pillow every night. By treating her environment, adding specialized hepa air filters, and keeping the cat out of the bedroom, her sinusitis improved.

An allergy profile is important (blood tests for unknown food and airborne allergies) and a program to build the immune system. Even if patients are not allergic to milk, ask them to stop

drinking dairy for a while, as this can have remarkable effects on sinusitis. Add in supplements that help downregulate allergic responses—such as quercetin, vitamin C, bromelain, and other supplements. Adding in an intravenous vitamin and mineral drip, and emphasizing vitamin C, can have tremendous benefits.

A hormonal workup, surprisingly, is often effective, especially for women as they age. Shifts in hormones can affect the immune system, and by testing for subtle hormone imbalances in estrogen, progesterone, and cortisol (the adrenal glands) and correcting them with pharmacologic doses of bioidentical, gentle hormones, the immune system often comes into balance and sinusitis clears up.

Checking for fungal infections can also be key. In late 1999, the Mayo Clinic documented that virtually all chronic sinusitis involves fungal infection, and that the body reacts by creating inflammation and swelling. Antibiotics do help, but only for a short time, because the fungus remains. Fungus actually thrive when antibiotics are given. A clue to fungus can be fungal nails or problems with athlete's foot or yeast infections. A good antifungal agent, which can be mixed into a topical spray by a compounding

pharmacy, as well as a systemic antifungal, can do wonders. Some practitioners mix betadine with xylitol, a sugar that stops strep bacteria from adhering to teeth and nasal mucosa, in a specific, gentle solution that can be spritzed into the nasal passages. Irrigating the sinuses daily with a simple sinus rinse can also help clear them. In addition, topical antibiotics can be irrigated into the sinuses when necessary, avoiding the problems of systemic antibiotics, and sparing the digestive tract.

Another unacknowledged but common cause of sinus infections are upper tooth infections. Sometimes root canals must be re-done and re-sterilized or a problematic tooth must even be pulled. A tooth that has gone bad, and carries low-grade infection, may seed infection in the sinuses, since the roots of upper teeth are often separated from the sinuses by only a delicate membrane.

Some patients have also benefited from concurrent acupuncture treatment. It is often possible to balance organ systems in the body and bring relief to the entire sinus area through simple acupuncture treatments. In sum, we need to treat the patient with the disease, and not the disease with the patient. Sinusitis, when it becomes chronic, usually requires looking beyond the obvious.

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