

## FAST FACTS: Sinus Headache

Sinuses are air-filled connected spaces inside the forehead, cheekbones, and nose. Sinuses produce thin mucus which traps harmful particles like dust, pollen, and bacteria and the mucus then drains out through the nose. When sinuses get inflamed - usually because of an allergic reaction or an infection -- they become inflamed, have increased mucus production and the channels that drain the sinus are blocked or congested.



### Causes of sinus headache

- About 80% of the time when individuals report they have a sinus headache it is a migraine with nasal symptoms.
- Sinus infections can cause sinus headaches. When mucus builds up in the sinuses it can cause a sinus infection. This causes inflammation and blocks the mucus from draining. Swollen sinuses cause face tenderness- thus producing the headache. The following are potential causes:
  - The common cold
  - Seasonal allergies which trigger increased mucus production
  - Nasal polyps can block mucus from draining
  - A deviated septum can prevent mucus from draining

### Symptoms of Sinus Headache

- Deep, constant pain in areas of cheekbones, forehead, or bridge of the nose.
- Pain usually increases with sudden head movement or strain.
- Other symptoms may include stuffy or runny nose, fullness in the ears, face swelling, and/or fever.

### Management/Treatment

- Relieve symptoms and treat infection if one is present.
- Healthcare provider may prescribe antibiotics or recommend antihistamines or decongestants short term.
- May take over-the counter pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen short term. If these do not help, provider may prescribe corticosteroids to decrease inflammation in sinuses.
- Non-pharmacological interventions that may help include drinking more fluids, using a humidifier or warm compress to painful areas, saline nasal spray or sinus irrigation.
- Notify healthcare provider any time a headache does not go away or reoccurs.
- Instruct on how to use a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the healthcare provider.
- Attempt the non-pharmacological treatments (such as those outlined on the page [Low-Risk Pain Treatments](#)) and document their impact on pain and record in the Pain Diary.

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### References

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