Sinus Infections

Alfred University Health Services: Patient Education

Sinus infections, also called sinusitis, are caused by fluid trapped or blocked in the sinuses where germs are able to grow. The sinuses are cavities that are located in the facial areas and are susceptible to fluid build-up when one experiences congestion.

How does someone get sinusitis?
In 90% of cases, sinusitis is caused by a virus, so in most cases an antibiotic is not helpful. Other causes include allergies or pollutants. Rarely, it is caused by bacteria.

What can I do to treat sinusitis?
As with any respiratory infection, plenty of rest and plenty of fluids are helpful. In addition, over the counter treatments for various symptoms can be helpful, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, decongestants, cough medication, nasal spray, antihistamines, etc. If symptoms don’t resolve within 1.5-2 weeks, a visit to the provider may be helpful as an antibiotic may be necessary.

What puts me at risk for a sinus infection?
There are several conditions which increase the risk for developing sinusitis, including:
- Previous respiratory infection, including the common cold
- Structural irregularities with the sinus cavities
- Weakened immune system
- Nasal polyps
- Allergies
- Smoking/exposure to secondhand smoke

What can I do to prevent a sinus infection?
Sinusitis and respiratory conditions are contagious. College life, especially in the dorms and cafeterias, is characterized by close living quarters and shared environments. Therefore, it is important to practice good hand hygiene, get plenty of rest, and keep strong to prevent becoming susceptible to this.

Please feel free to call us at the health center with any questions.

http://www.cdc.gov/getsmt/artic/for-patients/common-illnesses/sinus-infection.html

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**Signs and Symptoms:**
- Headache
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Loss of sense of smell
- Facial pain/pressure
- Postnasal drip
- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Bad breath