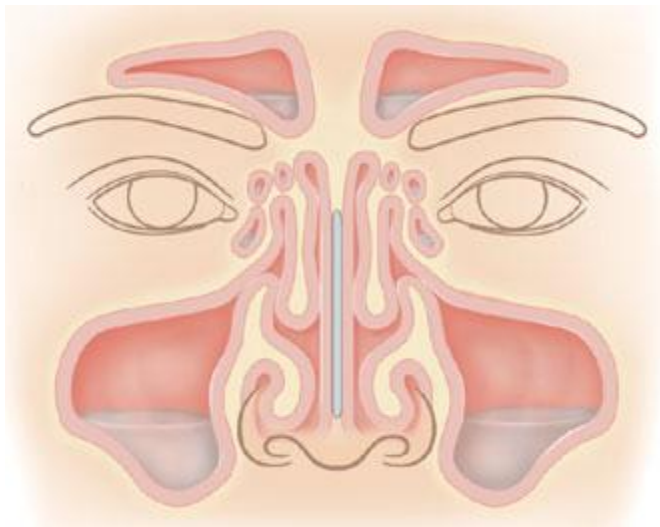


## Chronic Sinusitis

Chronic sinusitis is a sinus problem that won't go away or keeps coming back. It is often caused by long-standing allergies, anatomical obstructions such as polyps, or exposure to irritants such as smoke.



### The Effects of Chronic Sinusitis

Sinuses are kept moist and clean by a lining of **mucosa**. Constant exposure to irritants such as pollen, smoke, and chemical fumes can cause persistent **inflammation** (swelling) of the mucosal lining. Tiny hairlike **cilia** on top of the mucosa help transport mucus toward the opening of the sinus. Cilia can become permanently damaged by constant irritation, making it more difficult for mucus to drain from the sinuses.

### Common Symptoms

The symptoms of chronic sinusitis are generally mild and may include:

- Facial pain and pressure
- Headache and sinus pain
- Nasal congestion
- Postnasal drip
- Reduced smell and taste
- Cough
- Sore throat

### Diagnosis

The diagnosis of chronic sinusitis is usually made on the basis of a medical history and a complete evaluation. An endoscopy or CT scan can help reveal thickened mucosa, blocked sinus openings, and obstructions. Obstructions, such as a deviated septum, polyps, and inflamed turbinates, can interfere with drainage.

## **Treatment**

Medications may be prescribed to relieve congestion in the sinuses by reducing fluid secretion and swelling. Sinus irrigation (flushing with water or saline) may be recommended to clear out old mucus. Antibiotics may be prescribed to treat recurrent bacterial infections. Your doctor may also recommend an allergy control program for long-term management. In some cases, nasal and/or sinus surgery may be needed to improve sinus drainage or to remove nasal obstructions.

**Date Last Reviewed:** 1/15/2007

**Date Last Modified:** 2/14/2008