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SINUSITIS: Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Treatment Options

Sinusitis can be caused by factors such as an individual's anatomy or immune system or reaction to the environment.

Chronic rhinosinusitis (CRS), also known as sinusitis, is a major health problem in the United States, affecting up to 12.5% of the population or an estimated 39 million people each year. It substantially decreases a person's quality of life and day-to-day productivity, causing lost work days and missed school days, and can result in substantial healthcare costs for over-the-counter and prescription medications.

Simply put, sinusitis is inflammation (swelling and irritation) of the lining of the nasal passages and sinuses, the air-filled spaces under the eyes in the cheeks, over the eyes in the forehead, and between the eyes. While the bones of the face in these regions may feel solid, they are actually hollow spaces.

There are a number of factors (either alone or in combination) that can lead to sinusitis, including an individual's anatomy, the effect of the environment on the lining of the nasal passage and sinuses (such as environmental allergies), and the patient's immune system. In addition, approximately 20% of patients with sinusitis have nasal polyps, which

are benign, mucus-producing, inflamed growths of the lining of the nasal cavity and sinuses.

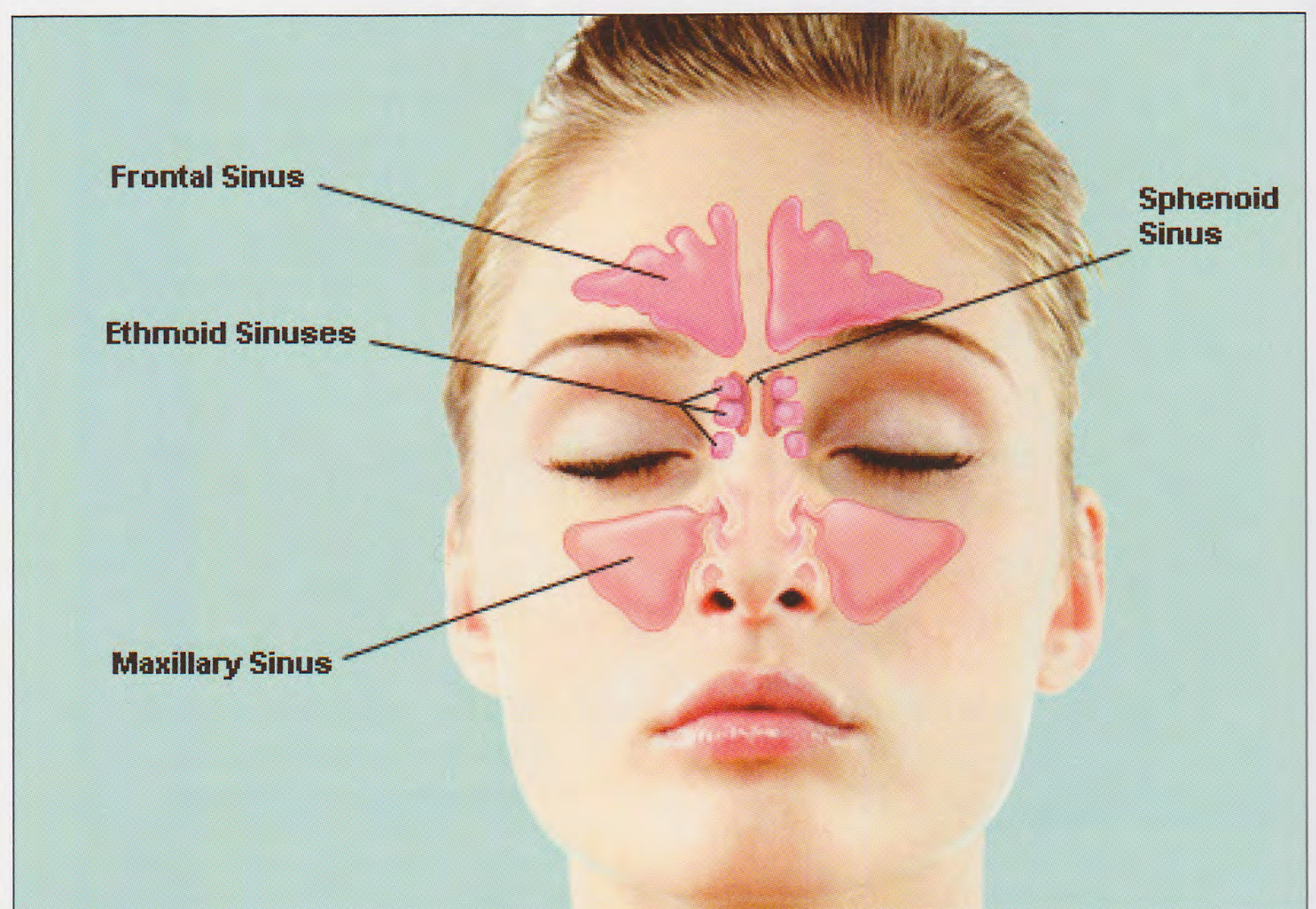
Symptoms of Sinusitis

Patients with sinusitis commonly have a combination of the following symptoms:

- Discolored nasal discharge or post-nasal discharge dripping from the back of the nose into the throat
- Nasal obstruction or congestion
- Facial pain or pressure
- Reduced or absent sense of smell or taste

Less commonly, patients may also complain of the following symptoms:

- Headache
- Fatigue and irritability
- Bad breath or foul smell in the nose
- Fevers
- Persistent sneezing or coughing
- Hoarseness (change in voice quality)
- Sore throat



- Tooth pain, tingling, or numbness
- Ear symptoms such as fullness, pressure, or hearing loss

Diagnosis

Because each of the symptoms listed above can also be caused by a variety of other health issues, sinusitis is largely diagnosed based on the history, timing, and combination of symptoms, in addition to a physical exam. The physical exam includes an internal examination of the nose and sinuses with a very thin telescope that allows the doctor to examine these areas in great detail. This procedure can be easily performed in the office setting, with minimal to no discomfort to the patient, and reveals important information regarding the presence or absence of inflammation, anatomic deformities, nasal polyps, and mucus and/or pus in the sinuses. Based on the history provided and the exam findings, imaging studies such as a computed tomography (CT) scan, or further examination such as allergy testing, may also be recommended.

Treatment

The treatment of sinusitis can vary greatly depending on the cause of the patient's disease. It may range from simple nasal irrigation with saline (salt water) to a variety of prescription nasal sprays and oral medications, including antibiotics if there is active infection. While most patients can be treated with medications only, if a patient experiences a complication due to a sinus infection or is not improving after trying the treatments listed above, surgery is typically considered.

If surgery is indicated for recurring or persistent sinus infections, it is performed using a minimally invasive technique called "endoscopic sinus surgery" to remove the blockages of the sinuses. The surgery does not require external incisions on the face, and does not alter the appearance of the nose. The whole procedure is performed

through the nostrils and usually on an out-patient basis, with patients going home the same day. During the procedure, an endoscope (a long, thin rigid telescope with a light and video camera) is inserted into the nose to visualize the inside of the nasal cavity and sinuses. This allows the surgeon to pass specialized surgical instruments through the nostrils to perform the surgery. Most patients experience a major relief in symptoms after surgery, including decreased facial pain and swelling, and decreased nasal congestion.



Deya N. Jourdy, MD, is a board-certified otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat physician) and the only fellowship trained full-time rhinologist in the Hudson Valley. He received his medical degree from Weill Medical College of Cornell University. He then completed a residency in otolaryngology at New York and Presbyterian Hospital – Columbia and Cornell, followed by a sub-specialty fellowship in rhinology and minimally invasive sinus and skull base surgery at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. He is experienced in the treatment of complicated nasal and sinus disease and anterior skull base disease. Dr. Jourdy's office is located in Ardsley (914-693-7636). For more information about sinusitis and Dr. Jourdy, visit www.mysinusdoctor.com.

Do you have sinusitis?
Take the test on the
following page to
find out how it is
affecting your quality
of life.

SINO-NASAL OUTCOME TEST

Does sinusitis have a significant impact on your quality of life?

If you think you suffer from chronic sinusitis, Dr. Jourdy recommends taking the following test.

Sino-Nasal Outcome Test

Below you will find a list of symptoms and social/emotional consequences of sinusitis.

To the best of your ability, rate the severity of each item over the past two weeks.

1. Considering how severe the problem is when you experience it and how frequently it happens, please rate each item below on how "bad" it is by circling the number (0-5) that corresponds to how you feel. 2. In the right-hand column, please check the most important items affecting you (maximum of 5).	No problem	Very mild problem	Mild or slight problem	Moderate problem	Severe problem	Problem as bad as it can be	Check the 5 most important items affecting you
1. Need to blow nose	0	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Sneezing	0	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Runny nose	0	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Cough	0	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Post-nasal discharge	0	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Thick nasal discharge	0	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Ear fullness	0	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Dizziness	0	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Ear pain	0	1	2	3	4	5	
10. Facial pain/pressure	0	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Difficulty falling asleep	0	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Wake up at night	0	1	2	3	4	5	
13. Lack of a good night's sleep	0	1	2	3	4	5	
14. Wake up tired	0	1	2	3	4	5	
15. Fatigue	0	1	2	3	4	5	
16. Reduced productivity	0	1	2	3	4	5	
17. Reduced concentration	0	1	2	3	4	5	
18. Frustrated/restless/irritable	0	1	2	3	4	5	
19. Sad	0	1	2	3	4	5	
20. Embarrassed	0	1	2	3	4	5	

Total Score (maximum 100): _____

The Sino-Nasal Outcome Test is for patients with chronic sinusitis. Simply put, it measures the burden sinusitis has on an individual's quality of life. Patients with chronic sinus disease often have a total score in the 20s and above. This tool can help you and your physician identify symptoms that affect you the most, and how these symptoms improve over time with treatment.

To arrange for a consultation with Dr. Jourdy, call (914) 693-7636.