

Hope & Healing

Sinus Problems and Sore Throats

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction

Whenever you have an "upper respiratory infection," this may include a cold, flu, sore throat, ear pain, sinus congestion, runny nose, cough, swollen glands, and nosebleeds. Your doctor sorts through the various possibilities and decides whether your problem is caused by an infection with bacteria (germs), an allergic reaction, or by a virus infection. In general, you can treat an allergic reaction or a virus infection with non-prescription drugs and home remedies and the doctor has antibiotics to treat bacterial infections. Bacterial infections are the cause of strep throats, ear infections, and most cases of sinusitis.

When Antibiotics Aren't Effective

During an upper respiratory infection you may make an unnecessary visit to the doctor because you believe that the doctor may have a cure for a cold or the flu. Or you may believe that antibiotics like penicillin and erythromycin are necessary to recover from the problem. Or, you may just feel so sick that you believe your doctor must do something. So, under some circumstances the doctor may try too hard to satisfy you and will give you an antibiotic for a problem that will eventually cure itself. This is understandable. The doctor doesn't want to tell you when you're sick that you wasted time and money by coming to see him or her.

How You Can Tell These Conditions Apart

There is some overlap in upper respiratory symptoms due to these three causes but here are descriptions you can use:

Virus Infections

Viruses may involve several portions of the body and can cause three basic patterns of illness; however, overlap between these three is not unusual. Your illness can have symptoms of each.

Viral Upper Respiratory Infection

This is the "Common Cold." It usually includes some combination of the following: runny nose, stuffy or congested ears, hoarseness, laryngitis with loss of voice, swollen glands and fever. Some symptoms may precede the others and either hoarseness, cough or loss of voice may remain after the symptoms disappear.

Note: The mucus blown from the nose is clear and runny, not yellow or green and thick, like it gets with a bacterial infection. And, the same with the cough. Usually the cough is dry without producing mucus or phlegm.

The Flu

With flu infection the fever is higher, the head hurts worse, and the cough is worse. The cough is dry. The mucus from the head is less than with a cold and it is clear also.

Viral Gastroenteritis

This is the "stomach flu" with nausea, vomiting, crampy abdominal pain, fever, and diarrhea. It can be very severe and

can be mistaken for food poisonings as well as appendicitis.

Allergies

An allergy is an exaggerated reaction by the body to something that will have no effect on most people. The body has an immune system that functions to defend us against dangerous substances that are in the air. In persons who are highly allergic this defense mechanism overreacts. It attacks harmful substances and substances that are not ordinarily harmful as well. Although allergic reactions can affect the skin through metals, chemicals, plants, and toxins and the digestive system through foods eaten, we are considering only the allergic reaction of the respiratory system here.

Hay Fever (Allergic Rhinitis)

You've seen it or had it: Watery, itching eyes, the sneezing, the runny nose. The symptoms shift with the seasons if pollens are the cause or they're present all the time if due to mold, house dust or other causes in your home.

Spring's trouble makers are tree and grass pollens. In summer it's grass and weed pollens along with mold and mildew. Fall's big culprit is ragweed and the mold from fallen leaves.

As with viruses, allergic reactions can be treated simply by using non-prescription drugs to relieve symptoms. Given enough time the attack usually runs its course without permanent

damage, only to return whenever another encounter is made with the pollen. There are times when the attacks are either so severe or so frequent that skin tests are performed to identify the specific allergens (the substance you're allergic to). Then a vaccine is made to be given over time to decrease the allergic response.

Bacterial Infections

Bacterial infections tend to localize to a single point. In the upper respiratory tract, infection is usually in the sinuses, the ears, and the throat.

The Sinuses

Together our four pairs of sinuses and our nose produce between a pint and a quart of mucus a day. The mucus sweeps and washes the membrane lining the nose and sinus chambers, picking up germs, dust particles, and other pollutants along the way. The mucus then flows backward into the throat and is swallowed, landing in the stomach, where stomach acids digest the germs.

This goes on throughout the day and night scarcely noticed by us because it is a normal function of the body. It is noticed, however, when the mucus production increases to the point that it creates a post-nasal drip.

Post-Nasal Drip

When we breathe in pollens, smoke, viruses, or any irritating substance the mucus production is increased to wash away the irritant. Sometimes the flow is so large that we collect mucus in the back of our throats. This is post-nasal drip. Normally it is clear. If the air is dry it may become thick. If there is a sinus infection the mucus becomes thick, yellow and sticky.

Sinusitis or Sinus Infection

Swelling of the sinus membranes is usually caused by a cold or an allergic reaction.

Sometimes sinus imaging studies are ordered to diagnose sinusitis but a recent study showed that they aren't usually necessary if the following are present:

- Pain in the jaws, like from a toothache. This usually indicates infection in the maxillary sinuses.
- Thick, yellow or green nasal discharge.
- Fever.
- Severe nasal stuffiness with the above findings.
- Headache.
- Tenderness with pressure of the fingers above the bridge of the nose (ethmoid sinuses) or above the eyebrow (frontal sinuses) or over the cheeks (maxillary sinuses). Acute sinus infections will require antibiotics, nose sprays or nose drops (usually limited to 3-4 days), decongestants, and pain medications for about 10 days.

Middle Ear Infections

The development of ear pain (usually in one ear only) during or following a cold, or pulling at the ear in a child, requires a visit to your doctor for evaluation. To wait is not wise because antibiotics may be required.

Strep Throats

Most sore throats caused by bacteria are caused by the strep germ. These should be treated with an antibiotic because to not do so runs the risk of developing an abscess of the throat, or rheumatic fever.

Summary

The ears, nose, sinuses and throat are in integrated system where a disorder that starts in one area may cause problems in another. Nonetheless, when an ear aches or a sore throat is severe or persists longer than 5-7 days or you are blowing thick yellow or green mucus from your sinuses, you need to see your doctor.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of the Ready Mind

When Shakespeare said, "All things be ready if our minds be so," he gave us a clear and definite guide in the art of living.

There is nothing you can't do or be if you are ready. Opportunity is actually one's own mental readiness. Napoleon said, "Opportunities? I make opportunities."

Could the Romans have had the telephone? Could the Greeks have had movies or the Persians automobiles? Maybe so if they had been mentally ready. Preposterous, you might say.

Think about it. The laws of nature were the same as they are now. The raw materials were in the ground. But, the minds of the ancients weren't ready.

Be mentally ready when your time comes.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.