

Sinusitis

What is Sinusitis?

Sinusitis means your sinuses are infected or inflamed. But this gives little indication of the misery and pain this condition can cause. Health experts usually divide sinusitis cases into

- Acute cases, which last for 4 weeks or less
- Subacute cases, which last 4 to 12 weeks
- Chronic cases, which last more than 12 weeks and can continue for months or even years
- Recurrent cases, which involve several acute attacks within a year

What Are Sinuses?

When people say, "I'm having a sinus attack," they usually are referring to symptoms of congestion and achiness in one or more of four pairs of cavities, or sinuses, known as *paranasal sinuses*. These cavities, located within the skull or bones of the head surrounding the nose, include

- *Frontal sinuses* over the eyes in the brow area
- *Maxillary sinuses* inside each cheekbone
- *Ethmoid sinuses* just behind the bridge of the nose and between the eyes
- *Sphenoid sinuses* behind the ethmoids in the upper region of the nose and behind the eyes

Each sinus has an opening into the nose for the free exchange of air and mucus, and each is joined with the nasal passages by a continuous mucous membrane lining. Therefore, anything that causes a swelling in the nose—an infection, an allergic reaction, or another type of immune reaction—also can affect your sinuses.

Air trapped within a blocked sinus, along with pus or other secretions (liquid material) may cause pressure on the sinus wall. The result is the sometimes intense pain of a sinus attack. Similarly, when air is prevented from entering a paranasal sinus by a swollen membrane at the opening, a vacuum can be created that also causes pain.

Excerpt taken from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.