

# AHRQ Safety Program for Telemedicine: Improving Antibiotic Use

## Acute Sinusitis – Patient Guide for Children and Adults

### What is a sinus infection or “acute sinusitis”?

- A sinus infection is when your sinuses swell, which can make you feel sick. It can cause:
  - A stuffy nose
  - Yellow, green, or clear mucus nasal drainage
  - Fever
  - Headache
  - Pain or pressure in your ear, face, or upper teeth
- Viruses cause most sinus infections.



### What should I do to feel better?

- There is no specific treatment for a viral sinus infection, but treating the symptoms can help you feel better as your body clears the infection.
- Take pain medicines such as acetaminophen (commonly known as Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (commonly known as Advil® or Motrin®). Store brands are just as good as name brands. Follow the instructions on the package.
- Use a saline (saltwater) nose spray.
- Take decongestants if you are older than 12 years of age, if advised by your healthcare provider.
- If your healthcare provider is concerned that you may have bacterial sinusitis and advises you to take an antibiotic, take antibiotics as recommended.

### When will I feel better?

- Most sinus infections last 7 to 10 days.

### Contact your healthcare provider if:

- You have a fever of over 102 degrees Fahrenheit that does not get better with medicine.
- You have been getting worse over the course of 3 days.
- Your symptoms get better and then worse.
- You do not feel better after 10 days.
- Go to the emergency department if you develop severe headache, vision changes, confusion, or weakness on one side of the body, or other symptoms that concern you.

*This document is intended to provide health-related information so that you may be better informed. It is not a substitute for your healthcare provider's medical advice and should not be relied upon for treatment for specific medical conditions.*



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