



ADVICE AND FACTS ABOUT ANTIBIOTICS AND INFECTIONS

Are you experiencing sinus pain?

The common cold is accompanied by swelling of the mucous membranes in the nose and sinuses, as well as potential fluid build up in the sinuses. This may lead to the production of phlegm and thick mucus, not to mention aching sinuses. Infants and young children usually have 6 to 8 colds a year, while adults get 2 to 3 colds a year, or more often if they come into frequent contact with children. Antibiotics have no effect on the common cold.

A sinus infection (sinusitis) is an inflammation of the nose and sinuses that is often caused by a virus or bacteria. Allergies, hypersensitivity and other factors can also cause a sinus infection. The body normally resolves a sinus infection caused by virus or bacteria on its own.

Adults

Adults who have had a cold for more than 10 days accompanied by coloured thick nasal discharge and severe pain in the cheeks or teeth may benefit from antibiotics. This is especially true if the doctor finds thick mucus in the nasal cavity and if the discomfort is one-sided (that is only on one side of the face).

Antibiotics are not generally effective against mild sinus infections. If the condition is severe and has been confirmed by X-ray or ultrasound, antibiotics can shorten the recovery period by four to five days. Symptoms often last for two to three weeks, whether antibiotics are prescribed or not.

Children

Childhood infections are vital to the development of the immune system. That's why children frequently have colds and runny noses with coloured mucus that can last a long time. Antibiotics don't do any good in treating these conditions. If an infant or young child has a runny nose contained to one nostril for a long time, it may be because of the presence of a small foreign object (such as a pebble) that has gotten stuck in the nose.

Advice

- Rinsing the nose with lukewarm water or saline solution can ease symptoms
- If the nasal congestion has become uncomfortable, a nasal decongestant spray can be used for up to 10 days
- Pain relievers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen may be helpful to alleviate pain.
- A nasal spray that contains cortisone may be effective in adults, particularly in those who are allergic or hyper-sensitive

Antibiotic treatment

If antibiotics are required, penicillin is the first choice (preferred) treatment.

Taking antibiotics when they aren't needed is a bad idea since they also affect the "good" bacteria in your body. Antibiotics can also have side effects, such as diarrhoea and skin rash. The use of antibiotics can also lead to bacterial resistance, which means that antibiotics won't have any effect when needed to fight serious infections.

What to watch for

CHILDREN: High fever, listlessness, swelling or redness over one sinus cavity or in the corner of the eye are signs that you should seek medical care for your child immediately.

ADULTS: Serious complications are extremely rare. Severe pain, swelling in the face or high fever are signs that medical care is needed immediately. If you experience sinus pain or discomfort for more than 3–4 weeks, see a doctor.