

Endoscopic Sinus Surgery

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This surgical fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional. If your injury or illness is critical or life threatening, call triple zero (000). To speak to a registered nurse, call healthdirect on 1800 022 222.

Notes and questions to bring to your doctor

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

For more help with what to ask your doctor, visit healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder

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This document will give you information about endoscopic sinus surgery. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is sinusitis?

Your sinuses are air-filled spaces at the front of your skull, between your eyes and above your upper jaw, that are connected to the inside of your nose (see figure 1). Sinusitis is an infection of the mucous membrane that lines your sinuses. It causes symptoms of pain, a blocked nose, discharge, reduced sense of smell and the feeling of mucus at the back of your nose or throat.

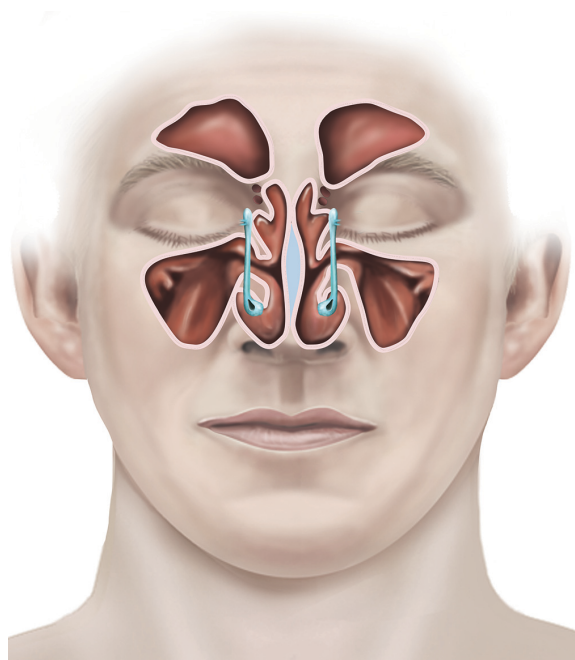


Figure 1
The sinuses

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to widen the passage between the sinus and your nose so that mucus no longer becomes trapped. This should prevent the sinusitis from coming back but your sense of smell may not improve.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Antibiotics may help to clear the infection. If your sinusitis is caused by an allergy, you may be able to prevent sinusitis by avoiding the 'triggers' of your allergy or by taking medication such as antihistamines.

If you use a nasal steroid spray for a long time, you can reduce the size of polyps (small growths which usually make the symptoms worse).

What does the operation involve?

The operation is usually performed under a general anaesthetic but a local anaesthetic can be used. The operation usually takes one to two hours.

Endoscopic sinus surgery is performed through your nostrils and does not result in any facial scars or change to the outside shape of your nose.

Your surgeon will use a small telescope to examine your nasal passages. They will use instruments to remove any polyps and to widen the passages from your sinuses into your nose.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications

- Adhesions, where scar tissue forms deep inside your nose
- Damage to the bone around your eye
- Blindness
- Leak of fluid from your brain
- Double vision
- Toxic shock syndrome
- Damage to your tear duct
- Reduced sense of smell

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day. If you had non-dissolvable packing in your nose, you will need to stay overnight and the packing will be removed the next morning.

Do not blow your nose for at least a week. Your nose will continue to feel blocked for a few weeks.

Your surgeon will give you a nasal spray or drops for you to use and you may be given a course of antibiotics to reduce the risk of infection.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Summary

Sinusitis is not usually serious but it can cause unpleasant symptoms. If medication does not help, endoscopic sinus surgery should help prevent the sinusitis from coming back.

Acknowledgements

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