Sinusitis

What is sinusitis?
The sinuses are air-filled spaces at the front of the skull that are connected to the inside of your nose. There are four pairs of sinuses: the ethmoid sinus, frontal sinus, sphenoid sinus and the maxillary sinus.

Sinusitis is an inflammation and infection of the mucous membrane that lines these sinuses. It can cause the following symptoms:
• pain, including headache and toothache
• a blocked nose
• nasal discharge of green/yellow mucus
• a feeling of mucus at the back of your nose or throat (post-nasal drip)
• high temperature
• feeling tired and unwell
• reduced sense of taste and smell
• bad breath (halitosis)
• cough.

How does sinusitis happen?
The mucous membrane that lines the sinuses produces mucus and this helps to keep the air that you breathe clean, warm and moist. If the opening between a sinus and the inside of your nose becomes blocked, the mucus becomes trapped and this causes the mucous membrane to become infected.

Sinusitis may be temporary, such as after a cold, or it may persist, such as in those with nasal allergies or polyps (grape-like swellings within the nose and sinuses). The majority of cases are caused by a viral infection, which your immune system will clear up within about a week. Bacterial infections may require antibiotics. Rarely, in severe cases, infection can spread to the area surrounding your eye (peri-orbital cellulitis) or face (facial cellulitis).

There are also a number of factors that can make the sinuses more prone to infection:
• smoking
• allergic rhinitis
• asthma or hayfever
• cystic fibrosis
• exposure to chemical pollutants, such as exhaust fumes
• a weakened immune system, e.g., due to HIV or chemotherapy treatment
• inflammatory disorders such as Wegener's granulomatosis (a very rare condition that causes blister-like lesions in the upper airways, lungs and kidneys) and sarcoidosis (a very rare disorder that causes enlarged lymph nodes and lesions within the lungs, sinuses, liver and spleen).
• facial injuries or surgery
• infected teeth

Treatment
• You have been admitted to hospital for treatment for severe sinusitis.
• You may need a CT scan and x-rays to examine the sinuses and surrounding areas.
• Antibiotics will treat any bacterial infection. These are given at first into the vein (intravenous) for maximum effect. A course of oral antibiotics will then follow.
• Strong pain relief will be prescribed. Taking this regularly should make you feel much more comfortable.
• The doctor may prescribe nasal spray or drops. These aim to reduce congestion and swelling within the nose and sinuses. Staff will advise you on the correct way of using them.
• You may feel very unwell and not manage much to eat and drink. The doctor may prescribe a drip of fluid (intravenous), which will hydrate you until you feel able to drink enough orally. A light diet will help you recover. Staff will help you choose suitable meals from the hospital menu.
• Medication will be given to reduce any raised temperature.
• Resting in bed is advised until you feel better. Lying propped up with pillows for support will help the sinuses to drain, as well as reduce congestion, swelling and pain.

Discharge advice
• Your doctor will advise you on a specific period of recovery. In general one to two weeks rest at home is recommended. If you need a sick certificate, please ask the medical staff before you leave.
• Continue with any prescribed medications (in particular make sure you finish any course of antibiotics). Nursing staff will explain how and when these should be taken.
• If you are prescribed nasal drops, please follow the recommended method of usage.
• Continue to sleep propped up to help ease congestion, swelling and discomfort.
• Avoid or cut down smoking as smoking affects the body’s ability to heal and also irritates the lining of the nose and sinuses. Staff can provide advice, aids (e.g., nicotine patches) and support group contacts to help you quit.
• Avoid crowded or dusty places, as well as people with coughs and colds. This helps to reduce the risk of repeated infection.
• Continue to eat a healthy diet, full of fruit and vegetables, as this will help to keep your immune system strong. Drink plenty of fluids, such as water, to help keep secretions loose.
• Contact f5 ward if you have any concerns following discharge or if you experience worsening symptoms.

Contact information
F5 ward: 023 8120 6511
          023 8120 4644

NHS 111: 111