

Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center



Sinus Surgery Post-Operative Care Instructions

What are the sinuses?

The sinuses are air-filled cavities (or holes) in the skull that are located adjacent to the nose. The tissue (mucosa) that lines these cavities and the nose swells and secretes mucus in response to infection or environmental irritants. Normally, the mucus produced by the sinuses drains into the nose and is, then, either swallowed or coughed up. With infection, the swelling of the sinus mucosa can make drainage difficult, leading to chronic, recurrent infections. The triad of nasal congestion, facial discomfort and discolored nasal drainage most frequently defines chronic sinusitis.

There are four pairs of sinuses.

- 1) Maxillary Sinuses (cheek sinuses)
- 2) Ethmoid Sinuses (the sinuses located between the eyes)
- 3) Sphenoid Sinuses (the sinuses located behind the nose)
- 4) Frontal Sinuses (the sinuses located above the eyes)

How is sinusitis treated?

Antibiotics, steroids, nasal sprays, and decongestants are often successful in treating short-term bouts of sinusitis. When medications fail to provide adequate relief from sinusitis, surgery must be considered.

What is sinus surgery?

1) The goal of sinus surgery is to enlarge the natural openings of the sinuses into the nose. Enlarging these openings makes it easier for the sinuses to drain, even when swollen from infection or environmental irritants. Sinus surgery is also used to remove nasal polyps, nasal masses, and, sometimes, to straighten the nasal septum.

2) Using small cameras with lights on the end (endoscopes) the surgery is performed through the nose, without the need for any external incisions. In addition to the use of endoscopes, special instruments have been designed to perform the task of removing thickened and diseased tissue from the opening of these sinuses.

3) Sinus surgery is generally an outpatient procedure, lasting from one to four hours. Small nasal packing that dissolves over time is used to aid proper healing of the sinus mucosa. Any residual absorbable packing will be removed during your first post-operative appointment. The saline sinus rinse (Neilmed sinus rinse or netipot) that you will use after surgery helps dissolve this packing.

4) Recovery time varies from patient to patient, but, in general, usually lasts between one to two weeks. Initially, patients should expect to feel congested and some mild sinus pressure. As the sinuses slowly heal, this congestion and pressure will decrease. It is normal to have some bloody nasal drainage after surgery.

5) It is important to remember that, while we perform the surgery, you play an active role in the success of its outcome. It is up to you to abide by the postoperative restrictions and implement the postoperative care instructions.

The Do's and Do Not's of postoperative sinus care:

DO:

DO take the pain medication prescribed.

DO take the antibiotics prescribed.

DO take the prednisone prescribed.

DO take live cultures while on the antibiotic: acidophilus/lactobacillus/ yogurt daily.

DO make sure you have a follow-up appointment 1-2 week(s) following surgery.

Call 713-798-5900 to make or confirm your appointment.

DO start your nasal irrigations the day after surgery unless otherwise instructed by your physician.

These irrigations must be performed at **least three times a day (more is preferable)**; however, it does not hurt to perform them more frequently. If you only have time to rinse two times a day, please rinse two or three times in a row, as this may also help clear out crusts more effectively. This is essential to the healing process. It removes the crusts that form as the nasal tissue heals and prevents scarring within the nose. **Please see the following page for specific instructions.**

DO cough and sneeze with your mouth open.

DO eat a regular diet.

DO take your pain medication before your first postoperative appointment. Do not drive or operate heavy machinery while on narcotic pain medication.

DO NOT:

DO NOT perform any heavy lifting (nothing greater than 15 lbs), bending, or straining.

DO NOT blow your nose or pick at your nose for at least 2 weeks.

DO NOT fly without your doctor's clearance for 2 weeks after surgery.

DO NOT stop your prednisone until directed to do so by your surgeon.

If you are on CPAP prior to surgery, **DO NOT** restart CPAP until cleared by your surgeon.

Call the ON Call Doctor Immediately If:

- Change in vision
- Increased swelling around the eyes
- Neck stiffness or deep head pain
- Continued Nausea or Vomiting
- Bright red blood that lasts more than ten minutes or causes choking
- Fever over 101 degrees

Telephone Numbers:

ENT clinic/scheduling:

713-798-5900

If you have any questions after office hours or on the weekends, please dial 713-798-5900 and ask for the ENT resident on call.

NASAL/SINUS IRRIGATIONS

It is required that you wash out your nose and sinus cavities with a saline solution. This is good in the post-operative period to flush out blood, crusts, and debris. In the long-term, this is also used to mechanically wash out infections. You can use **either** the recipe below to make the irrigation solution or the packets that come with the **Neil Med Sinus Rinse squeeze bottle** (see Neil Med box instructions).

RECIPE:

- 1 quart boiled or distilled H₂O
- 1 teaspoon canning/pickling/kosher salt (non-iodized)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Irrigate each nostril with 4oz (Neil Med squeeze bottle contains 8oz) of the above solution at least **three** times daily. While in the shower or leaning over a sink, aim the squeeze bottle diagonally (away from the septum). The fluid will circulate in and out of your sinus cavities, coming back out of the opposite nostril being irrigated. To accomplish this, focus on breathing through your mouth or making a “k” sound while you irrigate. This will close your palate so the irrigation does not wash out your mouth. The irrigations help to clean the clots from your nose and prevent scarring after surgery.

To view a video demonstration, please go to **www. Neilmed.com**. Once on their home page, click the link on the left side of the screen reading, “Neilmed Videos.”

It may be convenient to mix larger quantities of the saline solution and store it in your refrigerator, warming up each days supply prior to use. Consider buying one gallon of distilled water and adding 4 tsp of salt and 4 tsp of baking soda.