

## Chronic Rhinosinusitis

### *Symptoms, causes, and treatments*

*This handout explains chronic rhinosinusitis, what causes it, and how it is treated.*

### What is chronic rhinosinusitis?

*Rhinosinusitis* is inflammation within the nose and sinus cavities. In *chronic rhinosinusitis* (CRS), the sinuses are inflamed and swollen for 3 months or longer. CRS is also called *chronic sinusitis*.

*Recurrent acute sinusitis* is sinus inflammation that goes away when you take medicines, but comes back after you have not had symptoms for a while.

If you have chronic sinusitis, you may have:

- Pain or pressure in your face, often around your eyes, cheeks, nose, or forehead
- Yellow or greenish drainage from your nose
- Stuffy nose or difficulty breathing through your nose
- Changes in your sense of smell
- Tooth or mouth pain
- Ear fullness or discomfort



*Symptoms of chronic rhinosinusitis can include pain and pressure in your face, and headaches.*

### What causes CRS?

We do not know for sure what causes CRS. Some people seem to get sinus inflammation more easily than others. This is called being *predisposed* to the condition.

One cause of CRS may be an overactive immune system. This may be caused by *allergens* (substances that cause an allergic reaction). Some common allergens are tree, grass, or weed pollens.

### To Learn More

To learn more about chronic rhinosinusitis, please visit the American Rhinologic Society website at <http://care.american-rhinologic.org/conditions>.

But, there are many other “triggers” of sinus inflammation. Some of them are:

- Tobacco smoke
- Viruses, bacteria, or fungal spores
- Chemicals and pollution

When someone who is predisposed to sinus problems is exposed to a trigger, a cycle of inflammation begins. It starts with nasal congestion, drainage, and swelling. This may lead to a bacterial infection, which makes the inflammation and swelling worse.

### How is CRS treated?

To lessen swelling and inflammation, your provider may prescribe:

- *Antibiotic* medicines, if you have a bacterial infection
- *Steroid* medicines, either taken by mouth or sprayed into your nose
- Medicines to thin mucus
- Flushing your nose with salt water (*saline*)
- *Antihistamines* or *immunotherapy* (shots or drops) if you have allergies

### CT Scans

Your provider may ask you to have a *computed tomography* (CT) scan. This scan shows areas of your sinuses that cannot be seen by looking into your nose. If you need surgery, CT scans may also be used to help guide the procedure.

### Surgery

Your provider may advise surgery if your CRS does not go away or get better after treatment with medicines.

### For Best Results

- Learn about your condition. If you have questions about CRS or your care plan, ask your provider.
- Always follow your provider’s instructions. You will get the best results if you closely follow your care plan.

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### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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