

top 10 tips

BITE-SIZED ADVICE
FOR BUSY PHARMACISTS



>> THIS MONTH: SINUS CONGESTION

1

Know where the trouble begins

Sinus congestion is one of the most common and troublesome symptoms associated with colds, allergies and sinusitis. The sinuses are hollow spaces in the bones around the eyes and behind the nose. Each sinus opens into the nose for the exchange of air and mucus, and a mucus membrane lining joins the sinuses with the nasal passages. Anything that causes inflammation in the nose—such as an infection, an allergic reaction, or an immune reaction—can also affect the sinuses. Congestion occurs when the membrane linings become swollen from inflamed blood vessels.

2

One thing can lead to another

Sinusitis—inflamed or infected sinuses—is a common result of colds and allergy attacks. Inflamed sinuses interfere with the normal drainage of mucus and bacteria. Trapped bacteria can invade the sinuses, causing an acute infection and increased swelling and congestion.

3

Keep everything running

Congestion should be treated promptly, regardless of the cause. Keeping the sinuses clear during a cold or allergy attack can help prevent sinusitis. If the sinuses can't drain in the event of sinusitis, the condition will be more difficult to clear up.

4

Blow gently

To help keep the sinuses clear, the nose should be blown gently, clearing one nostril at a time. Blowing too hard (or too often) can irritate the nose and increase congestion. It can also force infection into the sinuses.

5

Heat things up

Warm, moist air can temporarily relieve sinus congestion by thinning mucus and improving drainage. Showers, hot drinks, hot packs, humidifiers and vaporizers can all help provide the steam for easier breathing.

6

Drink extra fluids

Increasing the body's moisture content will help thin mucus and improve drainage.

7

Sleep easier

Getting a good night's rest is not easy for those suffering from sinus congestion, as congestion is often worse when lying down. Keeping the head elevated with pillows may help improve drainage.

8

Use a decongestant

Decongestants provide very effective relief for sinus congestion, and can be particularly helpful for easing breathing during the night. They narrow the blood vessels that supply the nose, reducing the blood supply. The swollen membrane linings then shrink, and the nasal passages open.

9

Avoid the complications

Significant congestion may interfere with hearing and may be associated with episodes of not breathing during sleep (sleep apnea). Ignoring nasal allergies may increase the risk of asthma. While complications of sinusitis are rare, unresolved infections may spread to the bone.

10

Head off trouble

Colds and allergies should be treated promptly to avoid sinus problems. Those who are prone to sinus disorders, especially those with allergies, should avoid anything that could trigger inflammation, such as cigarette smoke, dust, pollen, and certain foods. Alcohol can also cause sinus membranes to swell.

