



Tower Bridge Hospital London

97–99 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1DT
020 7916 0029 · Open Mon–Sat, 9am–7pm
towerbridgehospital.co.uk

PATIENT INFORMATION · ENT

Sinusitis

why it takes longer than you expect

Sinusitis is inflammation of the air spaces around the nose, usually following a cold. It causes facial pressure, blockage and a thick discharge, and it typically takes two to three weeks to resolve — considerably longer than most people anticipate. Almost all of it is viral.

Go to an emergency department immediately if there is

- **swelling or redness around the eye**, or the eyelid becoming puffy
- **double vision, reduced vision**, or an eye that will not move normally
- **severe headache with a stiff neck**, or dislike of bright light
- **confusion, drowsiness**, or a seizure
- **swelling over the forehead**, or a soft boggy swelling of the scalp

Infection spreading from the sinuses into the eye socket or the skull is rare but serious and needs immediate hospital assessment. Swelling around the eye is the sign to act on. In an emergency call 999, or go to the Royal London Hospital Emergency Department, Whitechapel Road, London E1 1FR.

What to expect

2–3 weeks

usual duration of acute sinusitis

Day 5

when symptoms often seem to worsen briefly

Most

resolve without antibiotics

Symptoms are facial pain or pressure, particularly on bending forward, a blocked nose, thick discoloured discharge, reduced sense of smell, and sometimes upper toothache. Discoloured mucus does not indicate

bacterial infection and is not by itself a reason for antibiotics.

Treatment that works

- **Saline nasal rinsing** — using a sachet and a squeeze bottle or neti pot, once or twice daily — is the most useful self-treatment there is. Use cooled boiled or distilled water, never straight from the tap.
- **A steroid nasal spray** reduces the inflammation causing the blockage. It takes several days to work.
- **Paracetamol or ibuprofen** for the pain and pressure.
- **Steam inhalation** may ease congestion, though evidence is limited. Take care to avoid scalds.
- Plenty of fluids, and sleeping propped up.
- **Decongestant sprays** may be used for no more than five to seven days — longer causes rebound congestion that is worse than the original problem.

When antibiotics are considered

Antibiotics make little difference to most sinusitis. They are appropriate where symptoms have lasted more than ten days without improvement, where there is a clear pattern of getting better then markedly worse, where there is a high fever with severe pain, or where someone is at particular risk. Sometimes a delayed prescription is offered to hold and use only if things have not turned around in a few days.

When it keeps coming back

Sinusitis lasting more than twelve weeks, or recurring several times a year, is a different problem from an acute infection and needs assessing rather than repeatedly treating. Underlying causes include allergy, nasal polyps, a deviated septum and dental infection. Investigation may involve nasal endoscopy, allergy testing or a CT scan.

- Treat allergic rhinitis properly — untreated allergy is the commonest driver of recurrent sinusitis.
- Stop smoking; smoke paralyses the clearance mechanism in the nose.
- Continue saline rinsing daily as prevention, not only during infections.

Book an appointment if symptoms have lasted more than ten days without improvement, sinusitis keeps returning, you have facial pain with a fever, or you want nasal endoscopy or a CT scan. Our ENT team sees patients seven days a week without a referral, and we arrange CT quickly through our CQC-registered imaging partners.

Private ENT and GP care for sinusitis in East London

If sinusitis is dragging on, keeps coming back, or you simply want it dealt with quickly, Tower Bridge Hospital is a private ENT and GP clinic on Whitechapel Road, in the heart of East London. You can see a [private GP in East London](#) the same day most days — with no referral needed — for an examination, a clear treatment plan and a private prescription where it is genuinely warranted.

Where symptoms have lasted beyond ten days, keep returning, or point to an underlying cause such as allergy, nasal polyps or a deviated septum, our [private ENT clinic in London](#) can assess you directly, perform nasal endoscopy, and arrange a [CT scan](#) quickly through our CQC-registered imaging partners. We can also organise [allergy testing](#) where allergic rhinitis is driving recurrent infections. Many patients travel to us from across East London, the City, Canary Wharf and the wider Docklands, because a same-day private assessment with a GMC-registered doctor beats waiting weeks to be seen.

Sinusitis in London: common questions

Can I get a same-day appointment for sinusitis?

Usually yes. We hold same-day private GP and ENT appointments most days, including evenings and Saturdays, at our Whitechapel clinic — no referral required.

Do I need a referral to see an ENT specialist privately?

No. You can book directly with our ENT team. If you are not sure whether you need a GP or a specialist, start with a private GP appointment and we will guide you.

When should sinusitis be scanned or referred?

Sinusitis lasting more than twelve weeks, recurring several times a year, or not settling after appropriate treatment warrants assessment — which may include nasal endoscopy, allergy testing or a CT scan to look for an underlying cause.

How much does private sinusitis treatment cost?

Consultation fees are published in advance on our fees page, with the cost confirmed before any test or procedure. There are no hidden charges.

ENT assessment and fast CT access

Same-day appointments most days, seven days a week, 9am–7pm, on Whitechapel Road.

Book an appointment

or call 020 7916 0029

Where to get help

Tower Bridge Hospital London

97–99 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1DT

020 7916 0029

WhatsApp **07903 284 189**

info@mhwclinic.co.uk

Open Mon–Sat, 9am–7pm

In an emergency

Call 999, or go to the Royal London Hospital Emergency Department, Whitechapel Road, London E1 1FR.

When we are closed and it is not an emergency

Call NHS 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk.

Medically reviewed by [Dr Haydar Bolat](#), Clinical Director · GMC 7138332 Last reviewed: 26 July 2026

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This leaflet is based on current NHS and NICE guidance on acute and chronic sinusitis. It is general information and does not replace advice from a clinician who has assessed you. If your symptoms change or you are worried, contact us on 020 7916 0029, call NHS 111, or call 999 in an emergency.

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