

Sinus Pain Awareness

Special Considerations For Aging Patients

(NAPSA)—People older than 65 represent the fastest-growing segment of the population. By 2030, more than 20 percent of U.S. residents will be 65 or older.

An estimated 14.1 percent of seniors report that they suffer from chronic sinusitis. For the most part, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment of the condition are the same for the elderly as other adult age groups. However, there are a few special considerations:

Changing physiology. With aging, the physiology and function of the nose change. The nose lengthens and the nasal tip begins to droop. This restricts nasal airflow, resulting in the complaint often referred to as *geriatric rhinitis*.

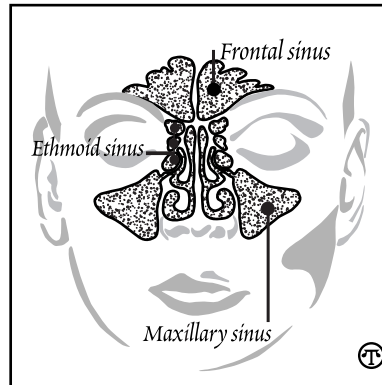
Symptoms of geriatric rhinitis are:

- constant need to clear the throat
- a sense of nasal obstruction
- nasal crusting
- vague facial pressure
- decreased sense of smell and taste

However, don't blame all upper respiratory problems on the aging process. Elderly patients with symptoms such as repeated sneezing, itchy and watery eyes, nasal obstruction with watery, runny nose and soft, pale turbinates (top-shaped bones in the nose) may have *allergic rhinitis*. Patients with this diagnosis benefit from skin or *in vitro* testing to determine the offending allergens.

Sinusitis is often preceded by rhinitis and rarely occurs without it. The symptoms, nasal obstruction/discharge and loss of smell, occur in both disorders. The linings of the nose and sinuses are both involved in the common cold (previously thought to affect only the nasal passages).

Patients with *chronic sinusitis* have a long history of thick drainage that is often foul-smelling



Older patients require special consideration during treatment of sinus conditions.

and tasting and is associated with nasal obstruction, headaches and facial pressure. These patients usually have pus drainage and nasal redness. A diagnosis of chronic sinusitis can be confirmed with a screening coronal CT of the sinuses.

Osteoporosis. Because of the concerns regarding prolonged estrogen use, a nasal calcitonin spray may be prescribed to prevent bone loss. *Sinusitis sufferers using a nasal calcitonin spray should advise their physician.*

Medications. Treatment needs to be tailored to seniors' slower metabolism and increased risk of side effects. The majority of the nation's elderly take multiple drugs including over-the-counter medications, and risk drug interactions more often than other patients.

For further information about sinusitis, treatment options and names of ear, nose and throat physicians, visit the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery Web site at www.entnet.org.

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