MANAGING SINUS INFECTIONS

• **A sinus infection is not the same as a cold.** Sinus infections occur when you’ve already had a cold or nasal congestion for at least a week, and the mucus gets trapped in your sinuses and becomes infected with bacteria.

• **Symptoms of a sinus infection include:**
  - Pain or pressure in the cheeks or forehead, especially when bending over
  - Thick sinus drainage that is usually colored and hard to clear/blow out of your nose
  - Pain in the upper teeth – sinus infections are often confused with a toothache
  - An unpleasant breath odor that doesn’t get better with brushing your teeth or using mouthwash
  - A cough that is worse at night or first thing in the morning
  - You may or may not have a fever

• **The primary goal of treatment is to clear the infected mucus out of your sinuses (just like draining an infection in the skin).** The best way to do this is with a combination of decongestants and mucous thinning medicines (such as guaifenesin, pseudoephedrine, and phenylephrine), and by rinsing out your sinuses.

• Sinus rinses – can be done with a Neti Pot, an over the counter sinus rinse, or you can make your own.

• Homemade Sinus Rinse: Mix 1 pint of water with 1 teaspoon of sea salt or canning salt (not the table salt that has iodine in it) and 1 teaspoon of baking soda. Use a bulb syringe (like the one used for infant noses) to squirt this up into each nostril while holding your head upright. Have tissues ready to catch everything that comes out!

• **Not all sinus infections need antibiotics!** If your doctor feels that your sinus symptoms are due to a virus or allergies, antibiotics won’t help it get better and can actually make you sicker.

• **If you are prescribed antibiotics, it is important that you take the whole course as directed, even if you feel better after just a few days.** Just because your symptoms have improved does not mean that your infection has been completely treated.

• **DO NOT take someone else’s antibiotics.** Different antibiotics are used for different types of infections. What is best for someone else may not be the correct drug for you – your infection may not respond the same, it may interact with other medications you take, or you could end up sicker or with serious side effects!

*If you have a fever (temperature of 101° or higher) after three days of antibiotics, or your symptoms are not completely gone after you’ve completed your treatment, call the clinic to leave a message for your provider.*