

New Treatment Restores Quality of Life for Distressed Sinus Sufferers

by Mark Zeme, M.D.

Imagine having a common cold or allergy that just won't go away. That's what life is like for 37 million people in the U.S. who live with a sinus condition known as *sinusitis*. But a new, minimally invasive procedure is bringing welcome relief to people who may require surgery if their sinus condition persists.

Now, through a major advancement in endoscopic sinus surgery, called *Balloon Sinuplasty*, a tiny catheter with a balloon attached is inserted through the nostril and into the sinus where it is gently inflated to open up the sinus passageway.

Patients who have undergone this treatment report full recovery of sinus function. Plus they feel immediately better following surgery, have far less pain and can return to work within 24 to 48 hours. Most importantly, patients gain back the quality of life that can be seriously compromised by sinusitis.

What starts off as a cold or allergy can lead to sinusitis

Some people have the misfortune of being born with highly sensitive immune systems. Whether it's seasonal allergens or environmental irritants, their reactive immune systems detect these foreign substances and unleash an army of chemicals in the eyes, nose, mouth and lungs to attack the "infiltrators." Histamines and other inflammatory chemicals trigger a cascade of symptoms leading to sinus congestion and pressure, increased mucus, itching and sneezing, post-nasal drip, etc.

Unfortunately, complications from these symptoms are not uncommon. Nasal lining congestion and inflammation can cause obstruction of the sinuses and trap mucus there, causing infection and sinusitis. In addition to cold and allergy symptoms, people can experience facial pain, toothaches, productive cough, diminished taste or smell, and fever and chills.

People with allergies are not the only ones beleaguered by sinusitis. Many people are born with constricted sinus anatomy and narrow sinus openings, or they may have had facial injuries, which can push sinuses to one side and constrict them.

Diagnosis and treatment of sinusitis

Whether patients have *acute, chronic or recurrent sinusitis*, physicians recommend medications with non-sedating antihistamines and decongestants, the active ingredients

for temporarily clearing up symptoms. Or they may prescribe topical nasal steroids to clear sinus passages or antibiotics to kill sinus infections.

But if the patient has had a full course of medical therapy, has been on antibiotics for several weeks and is getting recurrent sinus infections with pain, they may be referred to an ear, nose and throat specialist (ENT) for surgery.

New Balloon Sinuplasty procedure may be the answer

Up till now, patients with persistent sinusitis have benefited from a procedure to open the sinuses called functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS). Rather than creating artificial openings, which is much more invasive and leaves significant scarring, FESS identifies natural openings in the ostia.

But even with less invasive FESS there is still bleeding and some packing required in the nose. Also, there is potential for scarring and recurring obstruction of the sinus opening. There are also risks, albeit very rare, of visual loss or penetration into the brain.

Balloon Sinuplasty is the least invasive approach for treating symptoms of chronic sinusitis. It uses a small, flexible catheter, similar to catheters used in the heart for balloon angioplasty. The catheter is threaded into the sinus passageway and the attached balloon is gently inflated, widening the passages to clear blocked sinuses, restore normal sinus drainage and function, and preserve sinus anatomy.

Because this procedure eliminates any need to remove tissue or bone, bleeding, pain and scarring are minimized. For more information on the Balloon Sinuplasty procedure visit [.balloonsinuplasty.com](http://balloonsinuplasty.com).

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