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A thorough exam by Dr. Judge is always the precursor for treatment of allergies, asthma, and sinus conditions.

smoked or inhaled—are also harmful to the nasal mucus membranes.

“Air pollution. One EPA study estimates that air pollution is involved in more than 60,000 deaths each year, making it a leading cause of death in this country. Indoor air can be many times more polluted than outdoor air, and most of us spend most of our time indoors.

“Allergies. Those with asthma and nasal allergies are very susceptible to sinus infections. Their nasal and sinus mucosa are extremely sensitive and often hyperactive and potentially hypersecretory. When an allergic reaction takes place, there is swelling of the mucosa and obstruction of the sinuses. Food allergies, for example, may be a factor in chronic sinusitis. The foods most often implicated are wheat, cow’s milk and all other dairy products, chocolate, corn, soy, white sugar, brewer’s and baker’s yeast, oranges, tomatoes, bell peppers, white potatoes, eggs, garlic, peanuts, black pepper, red meat, coffee, black tea, beer, wine, and champagne.

“And there are many other causes for sinusitis, ranging from the common cold to dry, moist, and cold air to occupational hazards, dental problems, immunodeficiency, malformations of the sinuses, and stress.”

Healing *Sick Sinuses*

It can and often does make strong men weep and otherwise healthy women take to bed, facial compresses in place. The painful affliction they share is an infection of the sinuses—sinusitis.

Sinusitis is the failure of an important drainage system in our heads, says Dr. Dave Judge, founder of the Allergy, Asthma, and Sinus Center. “The bones around the nose contain the paranasal sinuses,” he explains, “which are hollow chambers with openings for drainage into the nasal cavity. The sinuses reduce the weight of the facial bones while maintaining bone strength and shape, and add resonance to the voice.

“Like the nasal cavity, the sinuses are lined with a mucus membrane composed of cells that produce mucus and have tiny, hair-like projections called cilia. Incoming dirt particles are trapped by the mucus and then moved by the cilia into the nasal cavity, where the sinuses drain. Because the drainage can be blocked, the sinuses are particularly vulnerable to infections and inflammation—called sinusitis.

“But sinusitis can be much more than uncomfortable,” says Dr. Judge. “In unusual worst cases, it can be fatal.” Dr. Judge is a double-board-certified allergist and immunologist as well as a pediatrician. His training included a fellowship in allergy and immu-

nology at Duke University Medical Center.

“Sinusitis is an inflammation of the sinuses caused by an allergy or a viral, bacterial, or fungal infection, and it can be either acute or of relatively short duration or chronic,” he explains. “The symptoms of sinusitis include tenderness and swelling of the affected sinus, but the precise symptoms depend on which sinus is affected. Maxillary sinusitis, for example, produces pain over the cheeks just below the eyes, toothache, and headache. Frontal sinusitis produces headache over the forehead. Ethmoid sinusitis produces pain behind and between the eyes, and headache—often severe—over the forehead,” the doctor says. “In people who have poorly controlled diabetes or an impaired immune system, fungi can cause severe and even fatal sinusitis.”

CAUSES OF SINUSITIS

“Sinus disease has become epidemic in this country and for many reasons,” says Dr. Judge. “In my practice, the problems related to sinus disease that are most common include:

“Smoking. It is extremely difficult to have healthy sinuses if you smoke cigarettes. Nicotine paralyzes the cilia. It would be difficult to name anything more harmful to the body’s air filter system than smoke of any kind. Marijuana and cocaine—whether

TREATING THE PROBLEM

“So the question is, how do we treat this problem that’s become ever more common in our midst? Treatment of acute sinusitis is aimed at improving sinus drainage and curing the infection,” says Dr. Judge. “One effective way to do that is with steam inhalation, which helps the blood vessels and the mucus membranes constrict.

“A combination of decongestants, antihistamines, and antibiotics may be used together to treat sinus infections. Decongestants work to ease breathing by shrinking dilated blood vessels to normal size and reducing the amount of fluid that is sent to the lining of the nose. Antihistamines prevent the histamine released from the immune system from causing nose and eye irritation.

“For sinus infection treatment, there are prescription medications available today that are more convenient to take, such as preparations that combine antihistamines with decongestants. Some of these medications are available in non-sedating formulas and only need to be taken once a day. For severe inflammation, corticosteroids may also be used to unblock nasal passages to help sinus cavities drain.

“For both acute and chronic sinusitis, antibiotics such as amoxicillin are given. People who have chronic sinusitis take antibiotics for a longer period. When antibiotics are no longer effective, surgery may be required to improve the sinus drainage system and to remove infected tissue.” **h&h**

For more information about the diagnostic and treatment options for allergies, asthma, and sinus conditions, contact:

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