

No place for antibiotics for acute rhinosinusitis in adults

Clinical Question	Compared to placebo or no treatment, how effective are antibiotics in adults with acute rhinosinusitis in ambulatory care settings?
Bottom Line	Without antibiotics, almost half of all participants were cured after one week, and two out of three were cured after 14 days. Five (diagnosis based on symptoms described to a doctor) to 11 (diagnosis confirmed by x-ray) more people per 100 were cured faster with antibiotics. A computed tomography scan could better predict who would benefit from antibiotics, but routine use could cause health problems related to radiation exposure. Ten more people per 100 were relieved faster of thick, yellow discharge from the nose with antibiotics compared to placebo or no treatment. Thirteen more people per 100 experienced side effects (mostly gastrointestinal) with antibiotics compared to placebo or no treatment. Compared with people who initially started antibiotics, five more people per 100 in the placebo or no treatment group had to start antibiotics because their condition worsened. Serious complications (e.g. brain abscess) were rare.
Caveat	Two Cochrane Reviews were merged for this update, which comprised different approaches with overlapping populations, resulting in different conclusions. We could not draw conclusions about children, people with suppressed immune systems, and those with severe sinusitis, because these populations were not included in the available trials.
Context	Diagnosis of acute rhinosinusitis is generally based on clinical signs and symptoms in ambulatory care settings. Technical investigations are not routinely performed, nor are they recommended in most countries. Some trials show a trend in favour of antibiotics, but the balance of benefit versus harm is unclear.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Lemienre MB et al. Antibiotics for acute rhinosinusitis. Cochrane Reviews, 2019, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD006089.DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD006089.pub5. This review contains 15 studies involving 3,057 participants.

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD006089.pub5/full>