



### **Is It a Cold, Your Sinuses or Allergies? Why It Is So Easy to Get It Wrong**

*Tampa Bay E.N.T. describes the differences between a cold, sinus issues and allergies.*

TAMPA, Fla. – Jan. 28, 2015 – Let’s face it, your nose often goes unnoticed until there’s something wrong with it. Then, you wake up one morning hardly able to breathe through your nose and suddenly it becomes the largest thing in the room. But how do you know what the underlying issue is? Is it a cold, your sinuses or allergies?

“Self-diagnosis is a common problem when it comes to nasal issues, such as congestion or a runny nose,” says Pamela Baines, M.D., Board Certified Otolaryngologist with Tampa Bay E.N.T. “If someone has had allergies before, they assume that is the culprit. If the weather is changing, they assume that is the reason. It could also be the symptoms of a sinus infection. In reality, the symptoms for all three can be similar, though treatment is not.”

So, what exactly are the differences between a cold, allergies and a sinus infection?

- Colds are caused by viruses and are contagious, with symptoms lasting approximately three to five days while your immune system fights off the attack of germs. Symptoms should then dissipate completely.
- Allergies, on the other hand, are due to an overactive immune system trying to fight off what it perceives to be germs, but are actually harmless substances like pollen or cat dander. The immune system’s misunderstanding causes your body to mimic the symptoms of a cold with a runny nose, coughing or sneezing, just as if it were fighting off germs instead of allergies.
- A sinus infection, or sinusitis, occurs when bacteria begins to grow in the nasal passages due to blocked airways and causes inflammation. Blocked airways can sometimes occur after a cold or with allergies. Symptoms of sinusitis include pain around the eyes or face, a cold that doesn’t seem to go away, congestion and/or headache. Sinusitis that lasts for more than three months or is recurrent in nature may require and benefit from intervention.

Allergies can be treated with antihistamines and decongestants, though allergy sufferers who do not find relief through these methods should seek help from a healthcare provider for additional treatment options, such as immunotherapy. Sinusitis can be treated with nasal sprays or medications to reduce swelling, but chronic sinusitis could require additional medication or even new cutting-edge in-office sinus procedures, such as Balloon Sinuplasty, a minimally invasive sinus procedure designed to treat inflamed nasal passages.

“Issues with sinuses may affect your day-to-day life, including missing work or school. It’s important to know the difference between the issues that can affect your nasal passages to receive the proper treatment and get back to your life,” says Dr. Baines.

Tampa Bay E.N.T. offers a wide range of ear, nose and throat services for patients of all ages, including conditions related to sinuses and allergies, voice and swallowing, facial plastic and reconstructive surgery, hearing and balance.

For more information about Tampa Bay E.N.T., go to [www.TampaBayENT.com](http://www.TampaBayENT.com) or call (813) 879-8045.

**About Tampa Bay E.N.T.:**

Tampa Bay E.N.T. has served the Tampa Bay community for over 40 years. From pediatric allergies to fitting hearing aids, our caring and experienced physicians specialize in ear, nose and throat care for the entire family using comprehensive, state-of-the-art technologies. We have six convenient locations throughout the Tampa Bay area to best serve you and your family.

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