

# Your Lingering Cold May Not Be a Cold at All

*Sinusitis continued from B1*

This surgery can be done in a surgical center with no overnight stay but does involve general anesthesia, according to Dr. Levin, who estimates that he has done around 2,000 of them (4,000 if you count the fact that most patients need the surgery done bilaterally).

After endoscopic surgery there is some bleeding so the nose needs to be packed with gauze and the patient may need to come back a couple times a week for a few weeks for follow-up care.

## Balloon Sinuplasty

Whenever possible, Dr. Levin said he prefers to do a relatively new procedure called a balloon sinuplasty, which works "every bit as well as the surgery does" for many patients, and is less invasive. The procedure uses only local anesthesia (unless a patient prefers more sedation), needs no gauze packing, and patients can return to work the next day.

Balloon sinuplasty involves inserting a small balloon into the ostia, and when the balloon is inflated, it pushes against the eggshell thin bone plate that encircles the ostia, dilating it and remodeling the bone so it stays open.

## Hybrid Procedure

If the balloon sinuplasty is not enough, Dr. Levin said he can do a hybrid procedure that uses both the balloon and surgical techniques to open the airways and remove problematic tissues.

## Medication

In the best-case scenario, no surgical procedure is needed to treat sinusitis. If caught early enough, sinusitis symptoms can be resolved using a range of antibiotics, decongestants, pain relievers, anti-inflammatory, and mucus-thinning medications.

ications.

Dr. Levin said he urges caution about taking cold medicines with antihistamines. He said these medications are good if you truly have a cold or allergy with watery nose and eyes, but mucus needs to have the right consistency in order to flow properly and antihistamines can over-dry it.

He also warned against over-the-counter aerosol nasal sprays, which he said are generally good for treating sinus conditions, but contain antibacterial preservatives (such as benzalkonium chloride and propylene glycol.) that have the negative side effect of damaging the cilia.

Over the past 30 years of working with sinus conditions, Dr. Levin has developed his own nasal flush with antibiotic, antifungal, and anti-inflammatory medications that doesn't have preservatives, and can help people avoid surgery or having to take oral antibiotics, which can be hard on the gastrointestinal system.

The medication is used to flush the nose twice a day and can clear out colonies of fungus and bacteria, as well as a slime called biofilm that bacteria produce to help them resist antibiotics.

When asked why he decided to go into a profession that involves looking up noses all day (something many of us would find unpleasant), Dr. Levin said that during his specialty residency program, he found he was in his element when treating sinus conditions and that it brought out the best in him.

"When I go to work and put my white coat and my headlight on, for me it's like what Superman is supposed to feel he when walks into the telephone booth as Clark Kent, and he takes off his glasses and walks out with his cape. For me it's being the best thing I can be... it never feels like work at all," he said.



Dr. Allan Levin with his nasal endoscope, a specialized tool that helps doctors distinguish a cold from other sinus conditions.

## 5 Tips for Sinus Health

1. Be aware of your environment. Check that your home and office are well-ventilated and free of dust and mold. Take extra precautions if there is construction in your neighborhood or home.
2. Keep humidifiers and vaporizers very clean. The moist environment inside them provides good conditions for growing mold that can then be pumped into your room.
3. It should be noted that air travel is hard on the sinuses because there are higher levels of ozone in plane cabins and ozone is toxic to lining of nose. Cold weather also inhibits the movement of the cilia and combined with plane flight, ups your risk of sinus problems.
4. Avoid over-the-counter decongestants after the first couple of days of a cold because they are toxic to the cilia, affecting their beat frequency and morphology.
5. Use a saline lavage when you first develop the symptoms of a cold. The lavage will help mobilize mucus, stimulate the movement of cilia, and flush away pollutant and irritants. Neti pots may not be as effective at cleansing the sinuses because the liquid drains down into the back of the throat and may not reach the sinuses above.



Clean your humidifiers and vaporizers regularly so they don't pump mold into your room.

# Researchers Question Belief That Sun Exposure Is Unhealthy

Rosemary Byfield  
Epoch Times Staff

It's time to reconsider advice on sun exposure, say British researchers, following new evidence that shows sunlight reduces blood pressure and benefits may outweigh the risk of skin cancer.

When skin is exposed to the sun's rays, a compound is released in the blood vessels that helps lower blood pressure, according to the study.

Lead study author Dr. Richard Weller said the research calls into question whether the so-called sunshine vitamin, vitamin D, recommended for supplementation by the government in winter, is the only factor in sunlight responsible for good health.

"Everyone's got hooked up about vitamin D," said Weller, who is senior lecturer in Dermatology at the University of Edinburgh. "The mechanism we've shown is separate to vitamin D, so vitamin D by itself does not account for the benefits of sunlight."

Study participants' skin was exposed to ultraviolet (UVA) light from tanning lamps for two 20-minute sessions. The first session they were exposed to UV rays and heat of the lamps. In the second session, the volunteers were exposed to heat only.

Blood pressure dropped noticeably for one hour following exposure to UV rays, but not after the heat-only sessions.

The findings showed that sunlight alters levels of nitric oxide in the skin and blood, reducing blood pressure. Yet vitamin D levels remained the same.



Spectators sunbath at Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships in London, June 2010. New research finds that exposure to sunlight lowers blood pressure.

This could be good news for heart health, reducing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

It is known that blood pressure rates are higher the further people live from the equator and also lower in summer than winter. Scientists previously attributed this to a change in temperature.

High blood pressure affects approximately 16 million people in the U.K.

and according to government figures, is the leading factor of 62,000 deaths from stroke and heart attacks per year.

Weller said that while diet, such as the Mediterranean diet, is an important factor in preventing heart disease, the sun may be an additional factor worth considering as well.

"What would be interesting is if sun was not just an additional but an inter-

active factor," he said.

Skin experts agree that avoiding excessive sun exposure is critical in preventing skin cancer, but warn that not being exposed to it at all, out of fear or as a result of a certain lifestyle, could increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, accounting for 80 times more deaths in the U.K. than those from skin cancer.

Skin experts agree that avoiding excessive sun exposure is critical in preventing skin cancer, but warn that not being exposed to it at all could increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"We need to be reconsidering our advice on sun exposure, Weller said.

Results from a recent study on the total Danish population of 4 million showed that Danes with skin cancer live 10 years longer than Danes without skin cancer.

A Swedish study in 2010 reported that Swedes who regularly sunbathed lived longer, and the health benefits of sun exposure outweighed the risk of skin cancer.

"There's no evidence showing that sunlight protection reduces death from any cause. My concern is that it might be doing the opposite."

"What matters is death, not skin cancer," Weller said.