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Ask-a-Provider: Richard Huffaker on Sinusitis

Ask-a-Provider is an occasional feature that highlights timely questions-and-answers with Asante health-care providers.



[Richard Huffaker, DO](#), specializes in ear, nose, and throat care for adults and children, and practices at Asante Physician Partners-Ear, Nose and Throat in Grants Pass. He earned his doctor of osteopathy degree from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, in Missouri. He completed a residency in otolaryngology at Oklahoma State University Medical Center in Tulsa, and a fellowship in head and neck cancer and reconstructive surgery with CENTA Group – St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital in Indiana.

Before joining Asante in September 2012, Dr. Huffaker biked 3,000 miles from Washington, D.C. to Grants Pass in an effort to raise funds for oral cancer research. He is originally from Colorado, is an avid outdoorsman and enjoys recreational opportunities in Southern Oregon, including fishing, hiking and biking. He values being part of the close-knit Grants Pass

community.

Q: I suffer from chronic sinus trouble. What may be the cause?

A: You are not alone! Sinus inflammation, called *sinusitis*, affects 37 million Americans each year. In some cases it is temporary, caused by a common cold or allergies, but for many people sinusitis is a chronic concern. It could be due to smoking or other environmental factors, nasal polyps, or simply the way your sinuses are constructed. Some people naturally have narrow drainage ducts that make them more susceptible to sinus inflammation and infection.

Recurring symptoms of sinusitis might include throbbing facial pain or pressure, thick nasal mucus, headaches, trouble breathing or sleeping, bad breath, irritability, fatigue, and even nausea.

Q: Are there any treatments available?

A: Up to 60 percent of chronic sinusitis patients do not respond successfully to medication.

But there's good news! At Asante, we provide an innovative treatment called balloon sinuplasty. This procedure opens up the natural drainage pathways of the sinuses, providing relief from sinus-related pain and pressure. Balloon sinuplasty is performed by an ear, nose, and throat physician, who inserts a specially designed catheter through the nose and into the inflamed sinus. Once the catheter is inside the sinus cavity, the physician slowly inflates a tiny balloon at its tip. This widens the natural drainage pathways of the sinus, relieving pressure and restoring the normal flow of mucus.

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Q: Why should I consider balloon sinuplasty, rather than other treatment options?

A: The benefit of balloon sinuplasty is that it is less invasive than traditional sinus surgeries. It can be done safely in the office setting, using topical anesthetic and thereby avoiding general anesthesia. There is no cutting or cauterizing involved, which means very little bleeding, minimal discomfort, and a shorter recovery time. Many people who undergo balloon sinuplasty are able to return to their normal activities within 24 hours.

If chronic sinus trouble is affecting your quality of life, talk to your primary care provider about a referral to Asante's Otolaryngology Department. We can evaluate your condition to determine if you are a candidate for balloon sinuplasty.

Dr. Richard Huffaker is an ear, nose, and throat specialist with Asante Physician Partners, providing care for children and adults. To schedule an appointment, call (541) 476-7775.

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