

Sinusitis Affects 9 in 10 Singaporeans, but Chronic Cases May Require Surgery

Sinusitis Affects 9 in 10 Singaporeans at Least Once, but Surgery Is Key for Chronic Cases Affecting Breathing, Hearing & Sleep.

SINGAPORE, SINGAPORE, August 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Sinusitis is so common in Singapore that nearly every adult experiences it at least once in their lifetime. The country's humidity, frequent exposure to allergens, and viral infections make sinus congestion, thick mucus, and facial pressure familiar discomforts. But while many cases clear on their own, chronic sinusitis can significantly disrupt breathing, sleep, hearing, and even voice quality, and for these individuals, surgery may be an important part of long-term relief.

To understand why sinusitis becomes chronic and what treatment options exist, we spoke with [Dr Ker Liang](#), an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist with more than 14 years of experience. Before establishing her own practice, Dr Ker served as a consultant at the National University Health System (NUHS), where she provided ENT care across NUH, Alexandra Hospital, and Ng Teng Fong General Hospital. She also managed a voice and swallowing clinic, treating a wide range of local and international patients.

A Common Condition That Often Gets Overlooked

Sinusitis occurs when the sinuses — air-filled cavities around the nose — become inflamed or swollen. This blocks normal drainage and leads to mucus build-up. Symptoms may include:

A stuffy or blocked nose

Thick yellow or green mucus

Difficulty breathing through the nose

Reduced sense of smell or taste

Facial pressure or pain around the cheeks, forehead, and behind the eyes

Head heaviness

Toothache or jaw discomfort

Bad breath

Some individuals also experience ear pain, sore throat, fever, or fatigue.

“Humidity and allergens in Singapore mean sinus inflammation can linger longer than expected,” Dr Ker noted during our interview. “Most people think sinus problems are just temporary, but when symptoms persist, they can affect sleep, concentration, and overall comfort.”

Acute vs Chronic Sinusitis: Why Some Cases Persist

Sinusitis generally falls under two categories:

Acute sinusitis, usually viral, develops quickly and often improves within days or weeks.

Chronic sinusitis, lasting 12 weeks or more despite treatment.

Causes range from viral and bacterial infections to less common fungal infections, especially among those with weakened immune systems. Structural issues — such as a crooked nasal septum, nasal polyps, cystic fibrosis, or untreated allergies — can also block drainage and prolong inflammation. Even dental infections may contribute.

“We often try medical therapies first, such as nasal sprays, antihistamines, or antibiotics,” Dr Ker explained. “But if sinus passages are narrowed or blocked, medication alone may not resolve the problem.”

How Chronic Sinusitis Affects Daily Life

When inflammation becomes long-term, the impact can extend far beyond congestion.

Breathing & Sleep

Blocked nasal passages force mouth breathing, especially at night, contributing to snoring and poorer sleep quality.

Hearing

Inflammation can affect the Eustachian tube, causing ear blockage or muffled hearing.

Voice

As a trained laryngologist, Dr Ker frequently sees the vocal consequences of persistent sinus issues. Post-nasal drip can irritate the throat and vocal cords, affecting people who rely heavily on their voice.

“Teachers, public speakers, and singers notice even slight changes in voice quality when inflammation becomes chronic,” she added.

When Surgery Becomes Necessary

For patients whose symptoms persist despite medication or whose imaging reveals significant blockage, surgery may be recommended. Two options are commonly used:

Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS)

A minimally invasive procedure that opens blocked sinus pathways and improves natural drainage.

Balloon Sinuplasty

A small balloon is inserted and gently inflated to widen narrowed sinus openings while preserving surrounding tissue.

“These procedures aim to restore normal airflow and drainage,” Dr Ker shared. “When that

happens, inflammation settles, and patients breathe more comfortably.”

Surgery is typically considered for individuals with recurrent infections, nasal polyps, structural blockages, or long-standing symptoms affecting sleep, breathing, hearing, or voice.

Seeking Help Early Makes a Difference

Chronic sinusitis can be frustrating, but it is manageable with the right evaluation and treatment plan. Early assessment helps determine whether the cause is infectious, inflammatory, or anatomical — and whether surgery might offer meaningful, long-term improvement.

As awareness grows, patients may better recognise that sinus symptoms lasting weeks or months are not simply an inconvenience but a treatable condition that can significantly improve with proper care from an [ENT clinic in Singapore](#).

Wendy Lee

W360 Group Pte Ltd

+63 917 818 2275

[email us here](#)

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