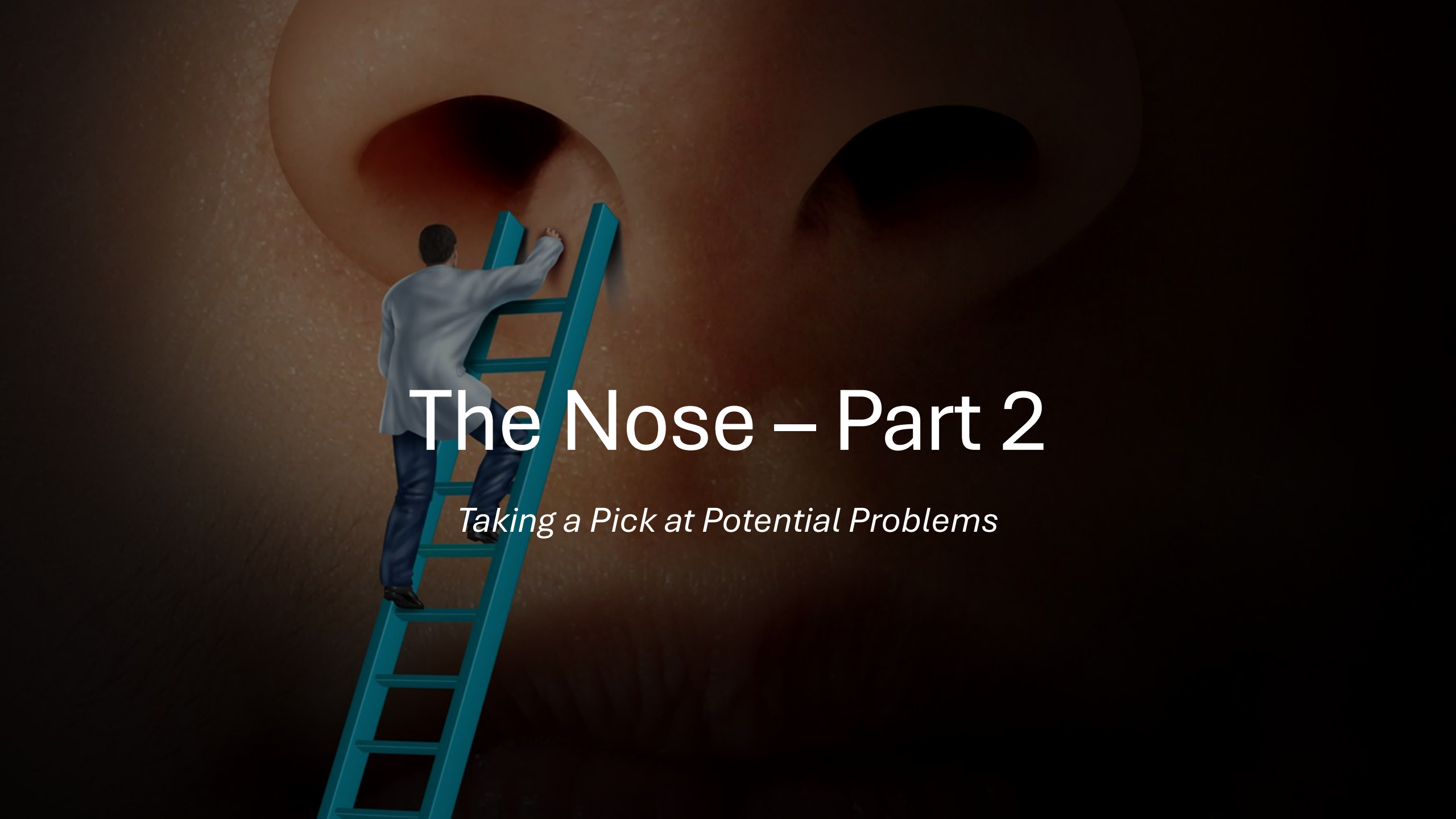


The Nose – Part 2

Taking a Pick at Potential Problems

When a brilliant system breaks down…

“The nose is elegant… until it isn’t.”

Problems are not random—they usually reflect:

- blockage
- inflammation
- infection
- structural issues
- or signaling problems (neurological)

Most nasal problems come down to **flow + inflammation + signaling**

The “Traffic Jam” Problem: Congestion & Blockage

What’s going wrong:

- Swollen mucosa
- Thickened mucus
- Impaired drainage (sinuses)
- Reduced airflow

Nasal Congestion: Common Causes

- Allergies (histamine)
- Viral infections (cold, flu)
- Environmental irritants
- Chronic low-grade inflammation

Nasal Congestion Consequences

Why it matters:

- Mouth breathing begins
- Oxygen delivery is less efficient
- Sinuses become stagnant → infection risk

HEALTHY SINUS

SINUSITIS

Support Strategies:

Conventional:

- Saline sprays/rinses (foundational)
- Short-term decongestants
- Intranasal steroids (when needed)

Holistic / Functional:

- NAC → thins mucus
- Quercetin / Vitamin C → mast cell stabilization
- Hydration + electrolytes
- Humidification

NAC (N-Acetylcysteine) – Support for Nasal Congestion

NAC is a powerful mucolytic, meaning it helps break down and thin thick, sticky mucus so it can move and drain more easily. It works by disrupting the disulfide bonds that give mucus its viscosity, making it especially helpful in sinus congestion, post-nasal drip, and chronic “stuck” mucus. Beyond that, NAC is a precursor to glutathione, offering added antioxidant and anti-inflammatory support to the respiratory lining.

Typical Dosing:
600–900 mg, 2–3 times daily (away from food is ideal, but not essential)

Quercetin – Support for Nasal Congestion & Allergic Response

Quercetin is a natural bioflavonoid that helps stabilize mast cells, reducing the release of histamine and other inflammatory compounds that drive nasal congestion, sneezing, and swelling. It is especially helpful in allergy-related symptoms and chronic sinus irritation. Quercetin also provides antioxidant support to the respiratory tissues, helping calm ongoing inflammation and improve overall nasal function.

Typical Dosing:
500 mg, 2–3 times daily (often combined with vitamin C for enhanced effect) – I use this Natural Factors, which is super bioavailable, so 250 mg twice daily works well for me.

Herbs for Sinus Support

Several herbs can be especially helpful for sinus congestion and inflammation by supporting drainage, reducing swelling, and helping the body address microbial overgrowth. Many work by improving circulation to the sinus tissues, thinning mucus, or gently stimulating movement and clearance.

Standout Herbs:

- **Elderflower (Sambucus nigra)** – supports sinus drainage and reduces congestion
- **Eyebright (Euphrasia officinalis)** – classic for sinus and upper respiratory irritation
- **Goldenrod (Solidago spp.)** – helps reduce inflammation and supports fluid movement
- **Horseradish root (Armoracia rusticana)** – stimulates sinus clearing and breaks up congestion
- **Ginger root (Zingiber officinale)** – improves circulation and reduces inflammation

Allergy Relief Herbs for Mast Cell Support & Histamine Cleanup

- **Grape Seed (*Vitis vinifera*)** – Rich in oligomeric proanthocyanidins (OPCs), grape seed helps stabilize mast cells and reduce histamine release, supporting normal allergic response.
- **Turmeric Root (*Curcuma longa*)** – Contains curcumin, a powerful anti-inflammatory compound that calms overactive immune responses and soothes irritated tissues.
- **Rosemary Leaf (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)** – Provides antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects while also supporting circulation and respiratory function.
- **Green Tea Leaf (*Camellia sinensis*)** – Supplies polyphenols (like EGCG) with antihistamine and immune-modulating properties.
- **Nettle Leaf (*Urtica dioica*)** – A classic natural antihistamine that relieves seasonal allergy symptoms such as sneezing, congestion, and itchy eyes.
- **Ginger Root (*Zingiber officinale*)** – Helps open airways and reduce inflammation while supporting digestion and circulation.
- **Neem Leaf (*Azadirachta indica*)** – Known for immune-regulating and anti-inflammatory actions, helping balance hypersensitive responses.
- **Nopal / Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia streptacantha*)** – Contains bioflavonoids and polysaccharides that calm mucous membranes and reduce oxidative stress in allergic reactions.
- **Osha Root (*Ligusticum porteri*)** – Traditionally used to support the lungs, osha soothes respiratory irritation and helps clear congestion.
- **Purple Dead Nettle (*Lamium purpureum*)** – Acts as a natural anti-inflammatory and antihistamine, often used for seasonal allergies and sinus relief.

Sinus Dysfunction: When Drainage Fails

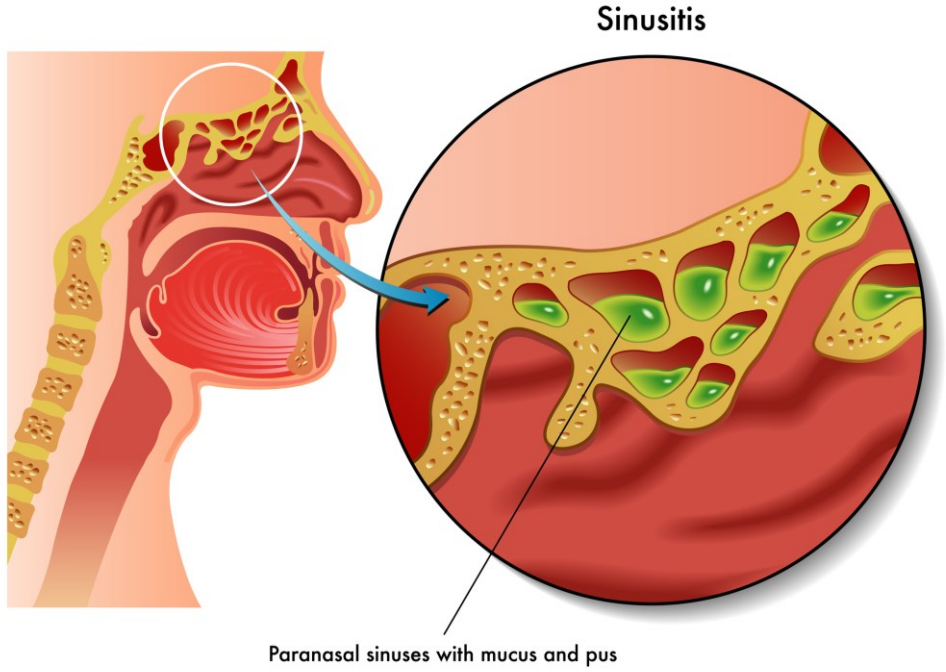
What's going wrong:

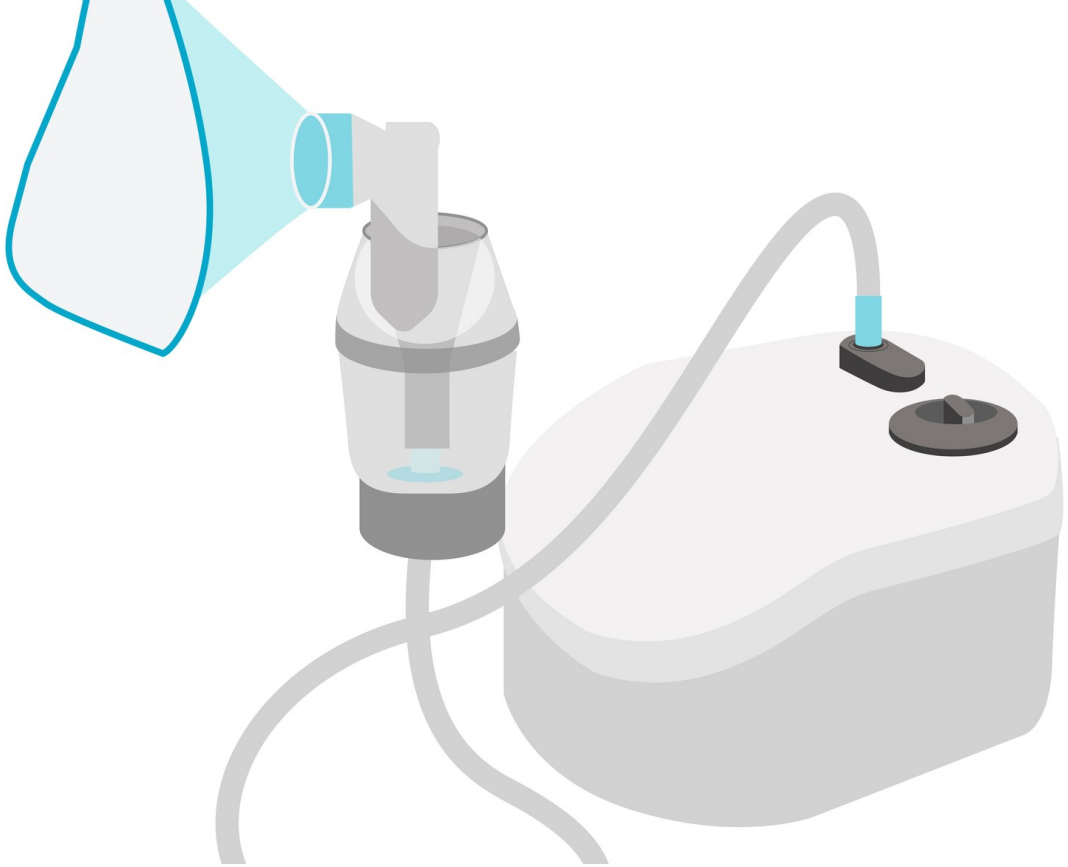
- Sinus openings blocked
- Pressure, pain, heaviness (hello "heavy head" feeling)

*Sinuses are meant to be **air-filled and light**—when fluid-filled, everything changes*

Symptoms:

- Facial pressure
- Headache
- Post-nasal drip
- Recurrent infections





Support Strategies

Conventional:

- Saline irrigation (Neti pot, squeeze bottle)
- Steam inhalation
- Antibiotics (when clearly bacterial)

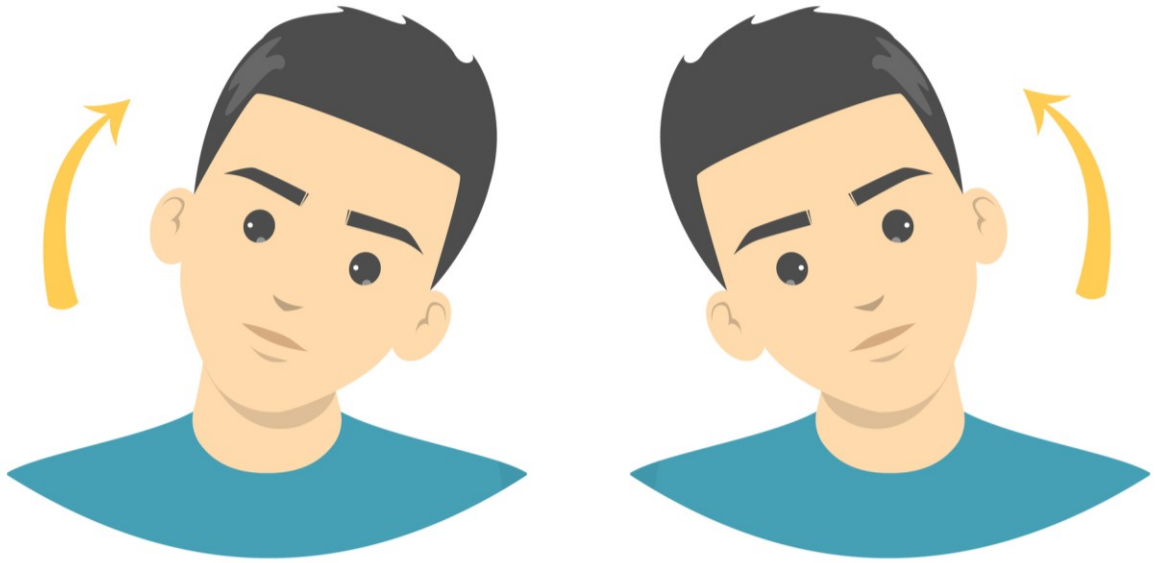
Holistic:

- Bromelain (reduces swelling)
- Xylitol nasal rinses (biofilm disruption)
- Essential oils (eucalyptus, peppermint—carefully used)
- Gentle lymphatic support
- Positional drainage (simple but powerful)

Nano-Spray by Silver Fern Brand

What is Nano Spray?

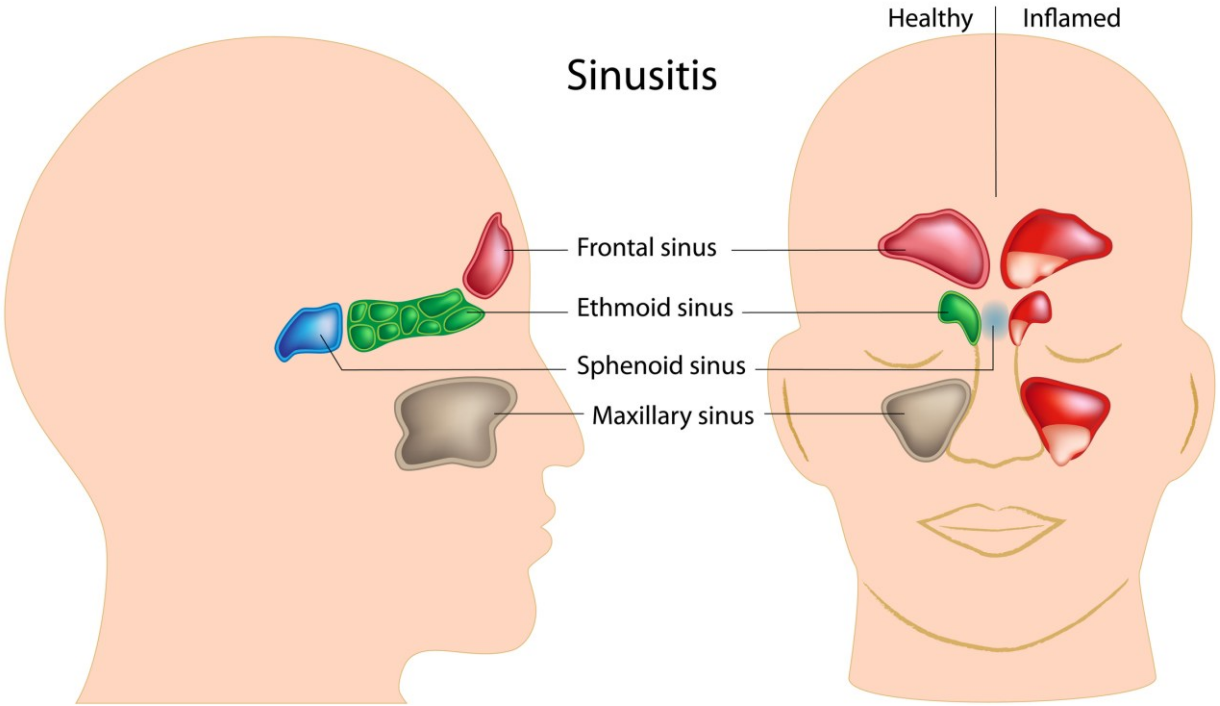
- Nano Spray contains frequency activated nano Ag4O4 (purified silver). This ingredient helps to break down the bad actors in the microbiome that often cause problems in the sinuses.*
- The purified silver in Nano Spray is NOT traditional colloidal silver. Nano Spray's frequency activated nano Ag4O4 is able to function with multiple strike actions compared to the single strike action of traditional colloidal silver products. This allows it to be highly effective even when used in smaller amounts.*



Positional Drainage – Helping the Sinuses Drain Naturally

Positional drainage refers to using body position and gravity to encourage mucus to move out of the sinus cavities and drain more effectively. Because the sinuses are small, air-filled spaces with narrow openings, congestion can easily become “stuck.” Simple changes in head and body position—such as leaning forward, tilting the head, or lying in specific positions—can help open these pathways and promote natural drainage.

Infection vs. Inflammation: Not Always the Same Thing



What's going wrong:

- Many people assume infection when it's inflammation

Distinction:

- Viral → thin, clear → turns thicker
- Bacterial → persistent, localized, often unilateral
- Chronic inflammation → ongoing congestion without infection

Support Strategies

Conventional:

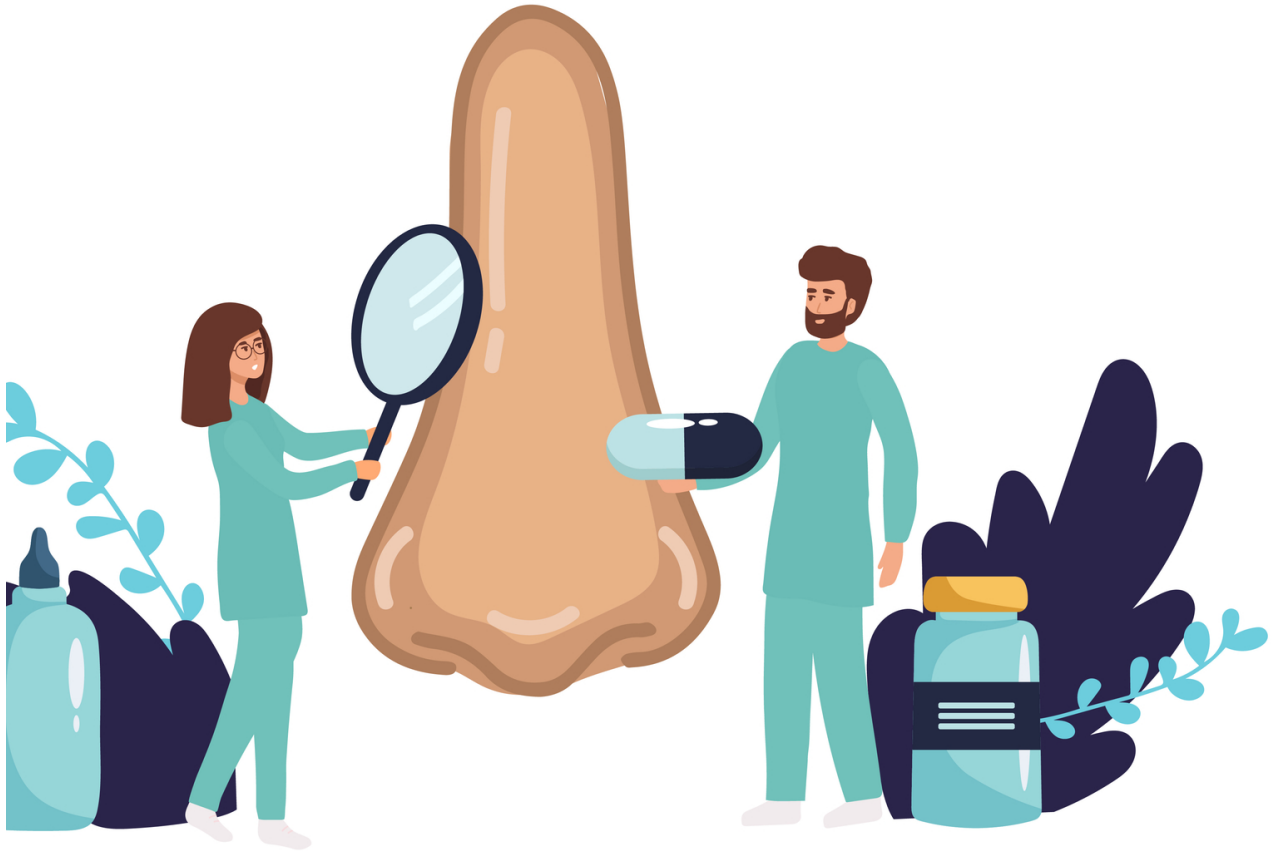
- Watchful waiting for viral
- Targeted antibiotics only when appropriate

Holistic:

- Immune support (vitamin C, D, zinc)
- Antimicrobials (herbal if appropriate)

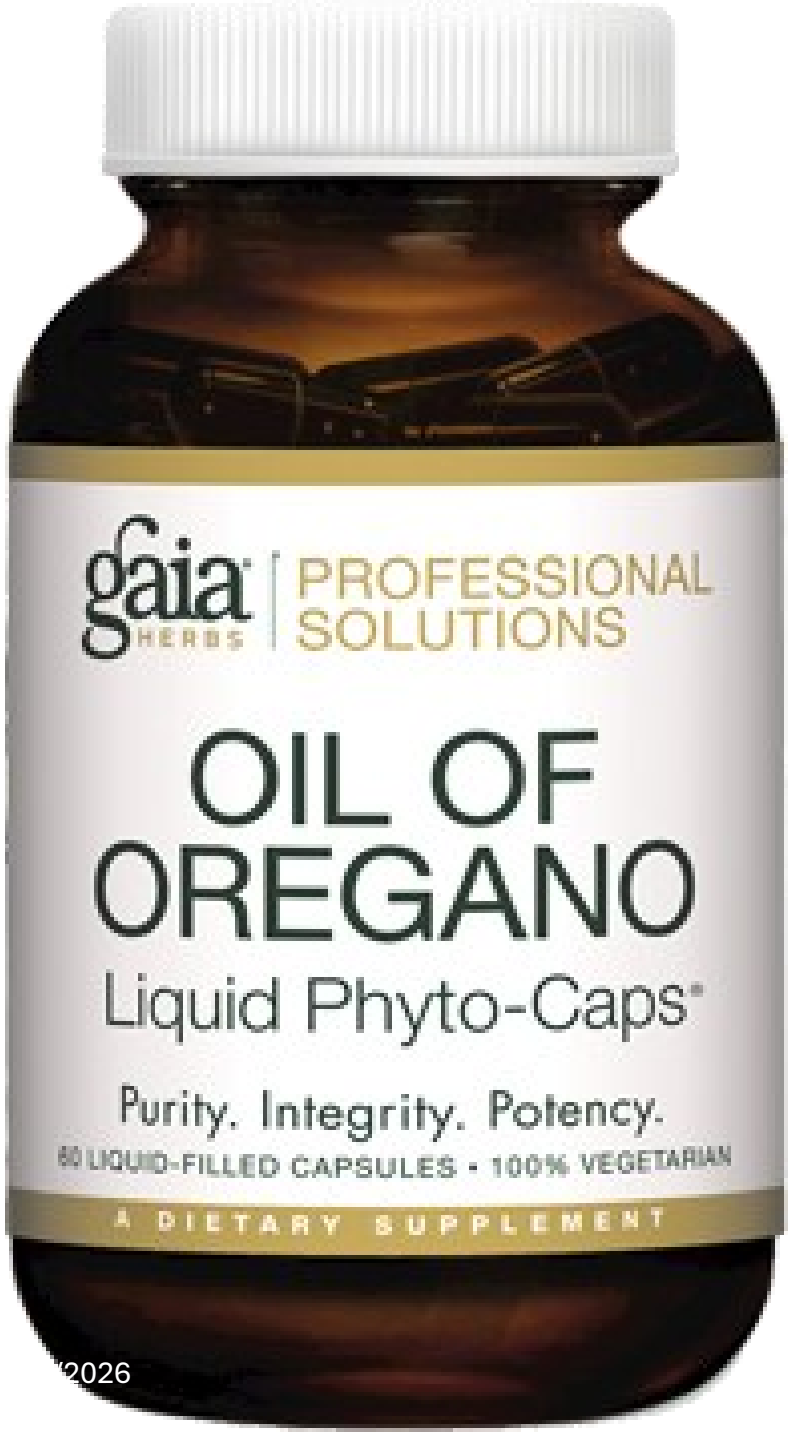
Surgical:

- Balloon Sinuplasty (innovative!)



Holistic Strategies for Sinusitis

Sinusitis is often a combination of **poor drainage, inflammation, and microbial overgrowth**, so effective support focuses on improving flow, calming tissue irritation, and supporting the body’s defenses.

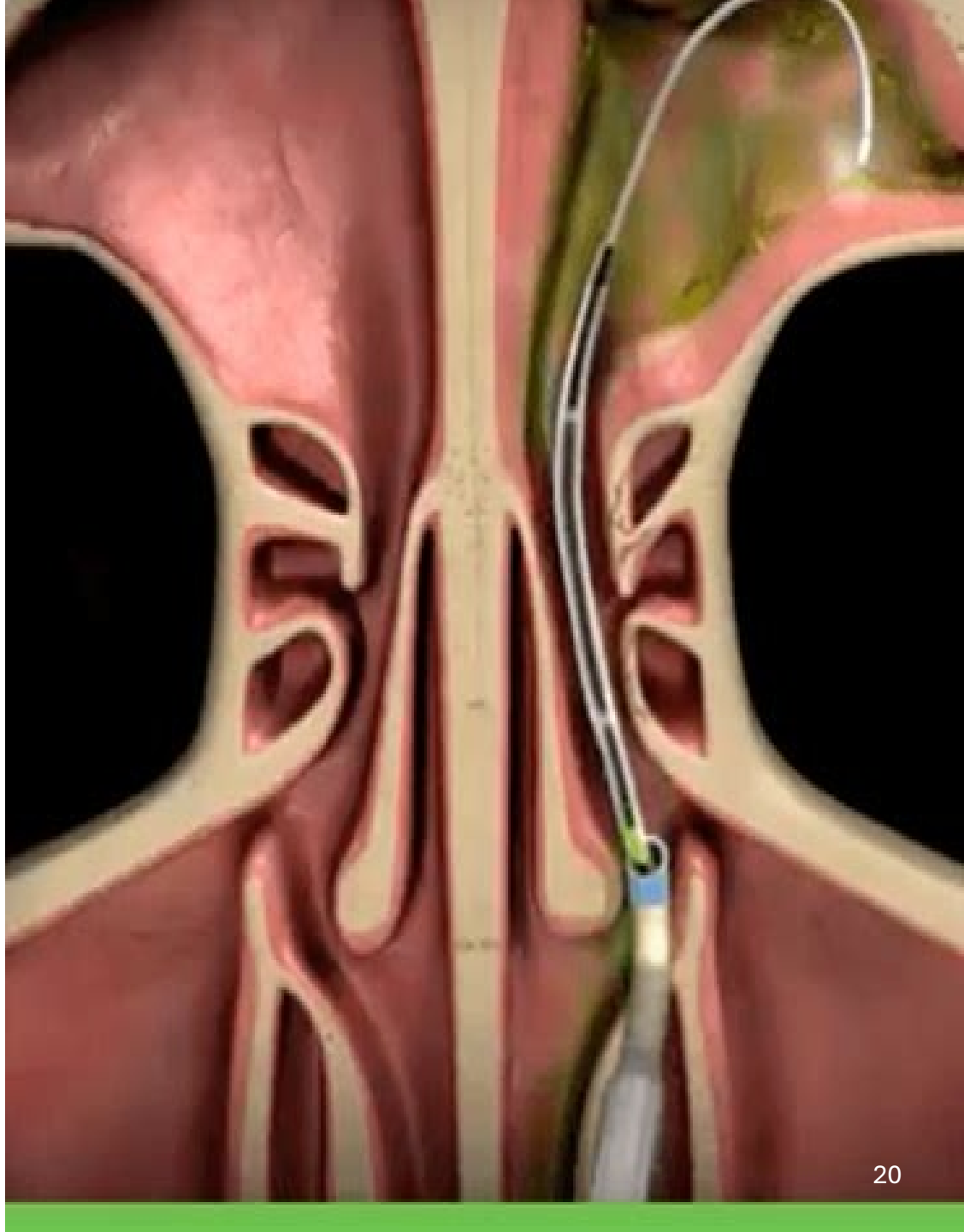


Oil of Oregano – For Sinus Infections

Oil of oregano is a potent botanical antimicrobial, largely due to its active compounds **carvacrol** and **thymol**, which have been shown to inhibit bacteria, fungi, and some viruses. It can be helpful in cases of suspected sinus infection by supporting the body's ability to address microbial overgrowth and reduce inflammation. It is best used as a short-term support rather than a daily long-term supplement.

Balloon Sinuplasty

During this innovative procedure, Dr. Jorgensen will illuminate your sinus passageways and use an inflationary tool to open the sinuses to promote airflow, allow drainage and release pressure and pain. Balloon Sinuplasty has been shown to discourage infection and relieve patients from further sinus pressure and problems. The procedure is practically painless as tissue is not removed and uses only local numbing agents. As a result, the expected down time for this procedure is a few days at most. In fact, many patients leave that day with resolution of pain and pressure, feeling better than they have in years without any down time! If you have a history of sinus pressure and pain, or long standing and recurrent infections and traditional surgery is not an option for you, please contact our office for more information concerning in office balloon sinuplasty.



Smell Distortion & Loss (Anosmia / Parosmia)

What's going wrong:

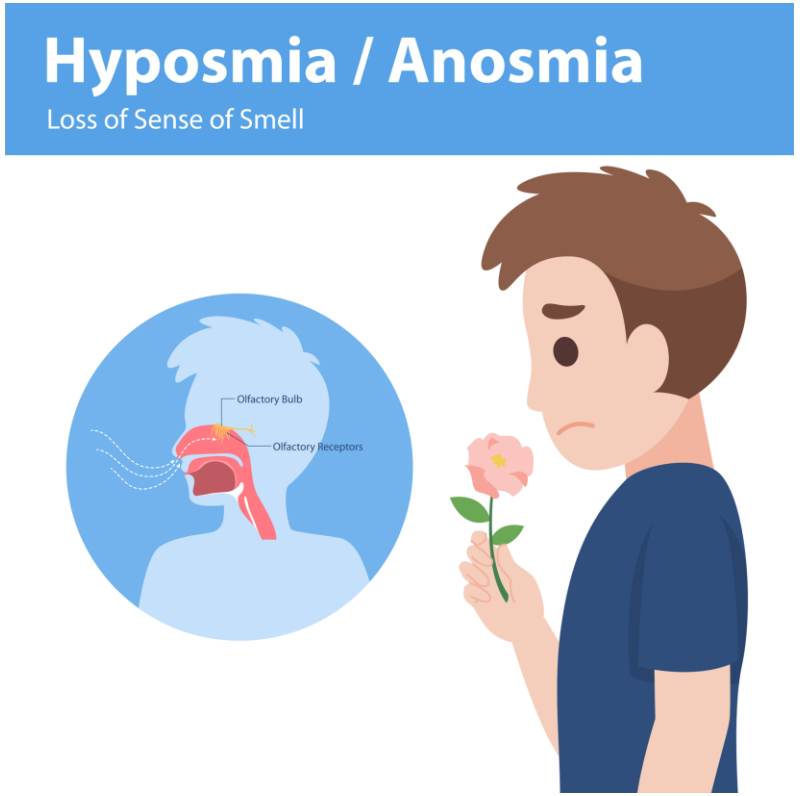
- Olfactory nerve disruption
- Receptor damage (common post-viral, especially COVID)

Symptoms:

- Loss of smell
- Distorted smells (things smell "off" or unpleasant)

Why it matters:

- Direct impact on taste
- Safety (can't smell smoke, gas, spoiled food)
- Emotional impact (loss of sensory richness)



Support Strategies

Conventional:

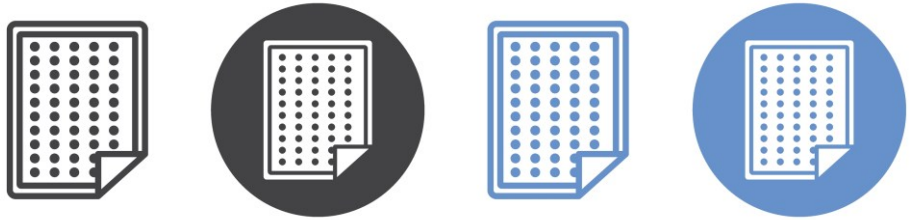
- Smell retraining therapy (evidence-based)
- Time (nerve regeneration can occur)

Holistic/Nutrients:

- Zinc (critical for smell function)
- NAC & Vitamin A (mucosal + epithelial repair)
- Lipoic acid
- Omega-3s (nerve support)
- B vitamins (especially B12)
- PEA (palmitoylethanolamide)

Low-Dose Transdermal Nicotine – Support for Post-Viral Smell Loss

Low-dose transdermal nicotine has been explored as a potential support for persistent loss or distortion of smell following viral illness, including COVID-19. The proposed mechanisms include modulation of nicotinic acetylcholine receptors involved in neural signaling, potential displacement of viral interference at receptor sites, and enhancement of cerebral blood flow. When used, very low-dose patches (e.g., 7 mg) are typically applied for short durations (7 days). I have seen very good results with clients using this for post-Covid loss of smell and/or smell distortions. **More Info Here**



When Smell Affects Taste

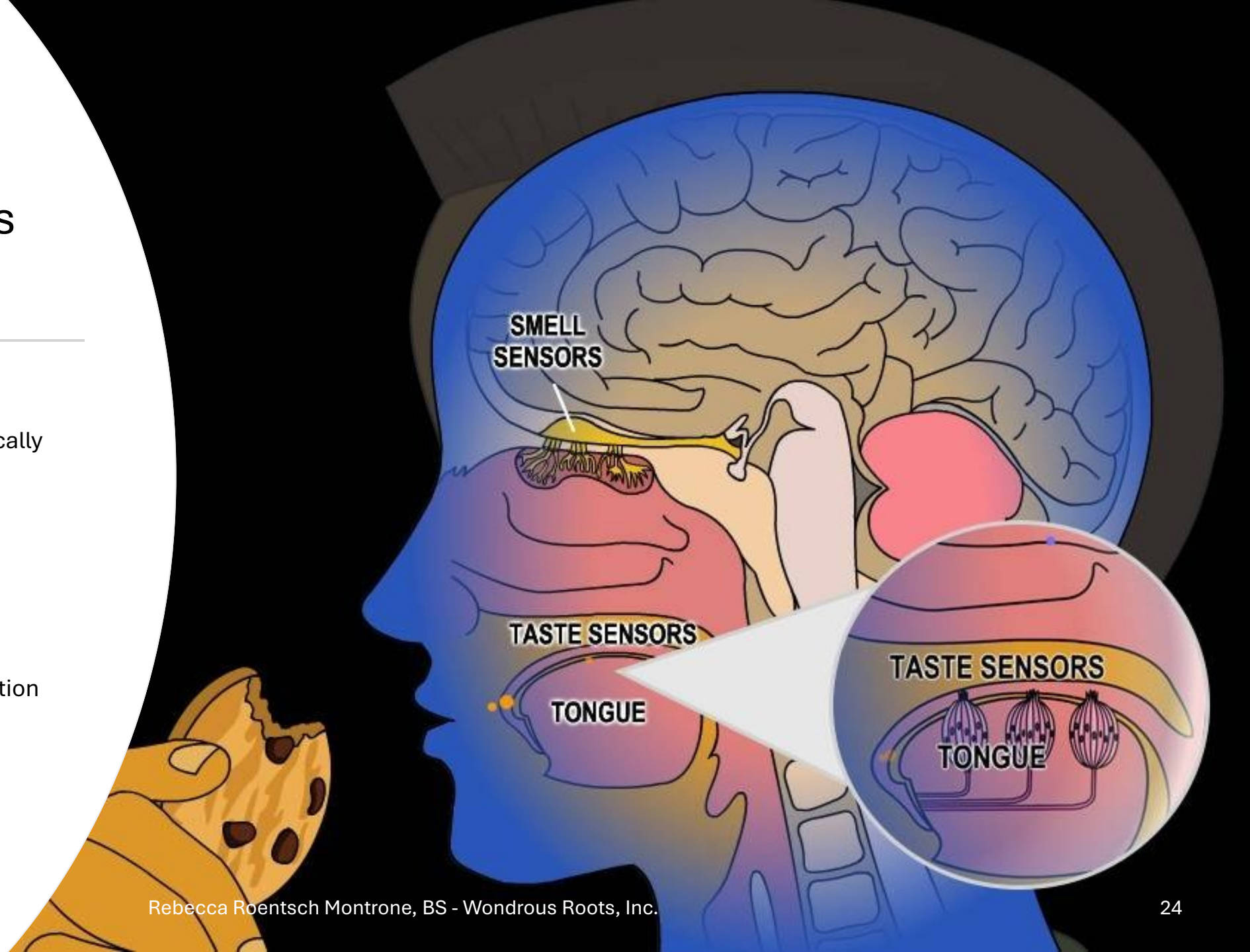
What's going wrong:

- Flavor perception drops dramatically

"What we think of as taste is mostly smell."

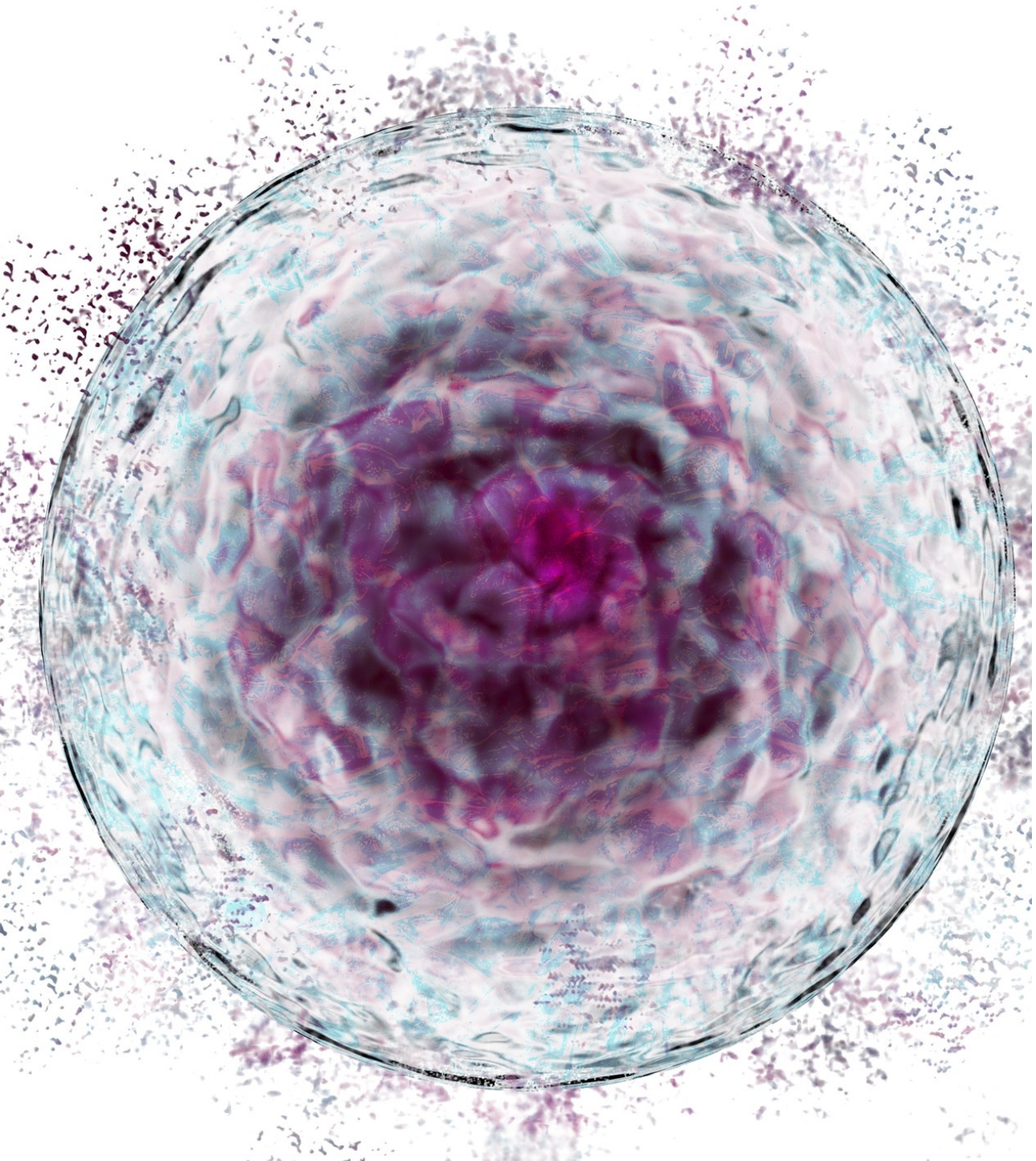
Consequences:

- Reduced appetite
- Overuse of sugar/salt for stimulation
- Nutritional imbalance



Understanding the Connection Between Smell and Taste

- Smell and taste are often discussed together because they are intimately connected. What we perceive as “flavor” is actually a complex combination of taste, smell, and texture. Our taste buds on the tongue can only detect five basic tastes: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami (savory). The rest of what we experience as flavor comes from our sense of smell.
- When you chew food, volatile aroma compounds are released and travel up the back of your throat into your nasal cavity. These compounds stimulate olfactory receptors, which send signals to the brain, allowing you to identify a wide range of flavors. This explains why food often tastes bland when you have a stuffy nose.

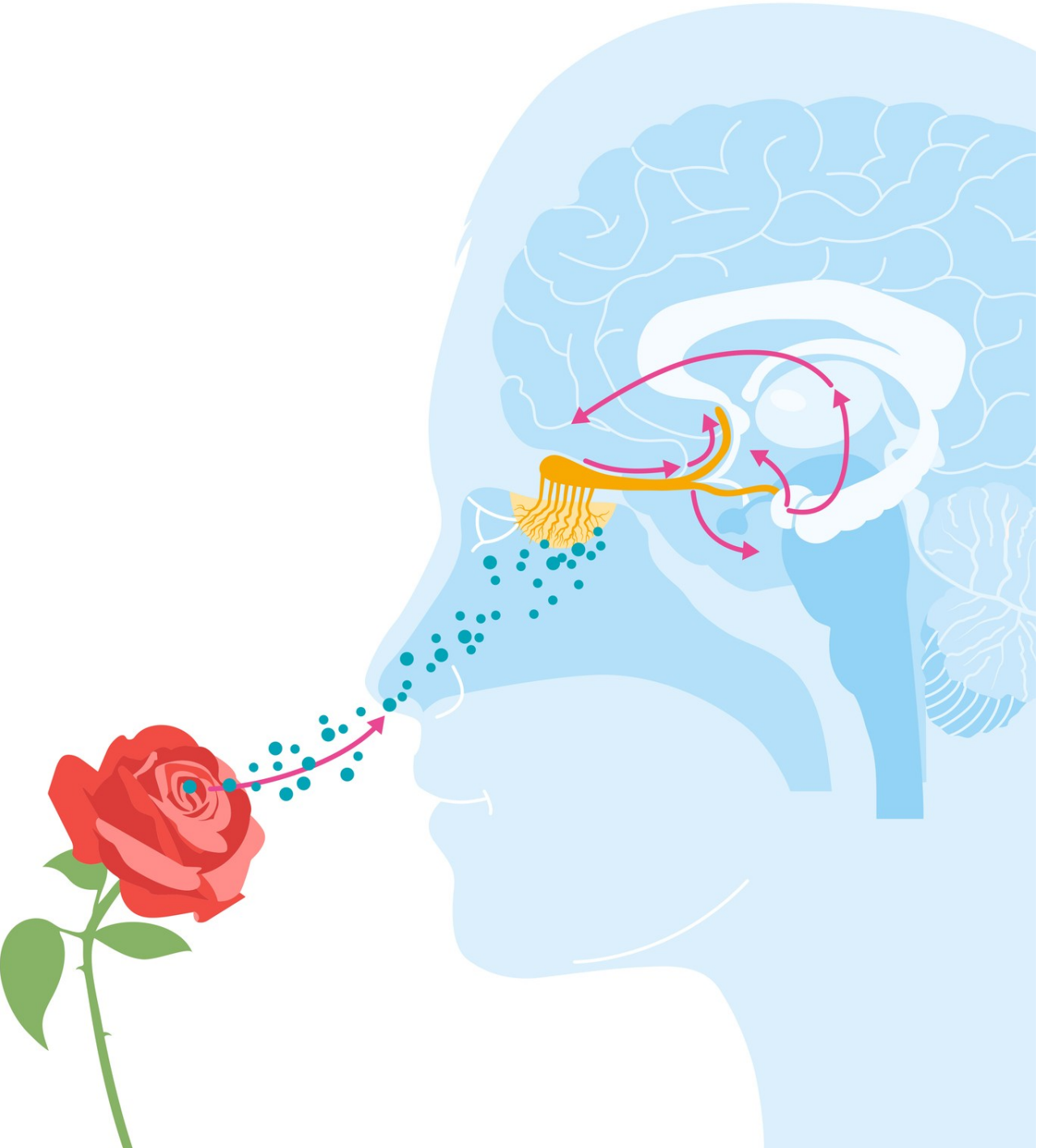


Support Strategies

- Restore smell (primary goal)
- Emphasize texture + temperature in foods
- Use herbs/spices strategically
- Digestive support (bitters, enzymes)

Emerging Therapies:

- Stem Cell
- PRP
- Gene Therapy



The Emotional & Memory Connection

What's going wrong:

- Loss of smell = loss of emotional anchors

Key concept:

- Olfactory system is directly linked to the **limbic system**

Real-world impact:

- Reduced pleasure in life
- Blunted emotional recall
- Even depressive symptoms

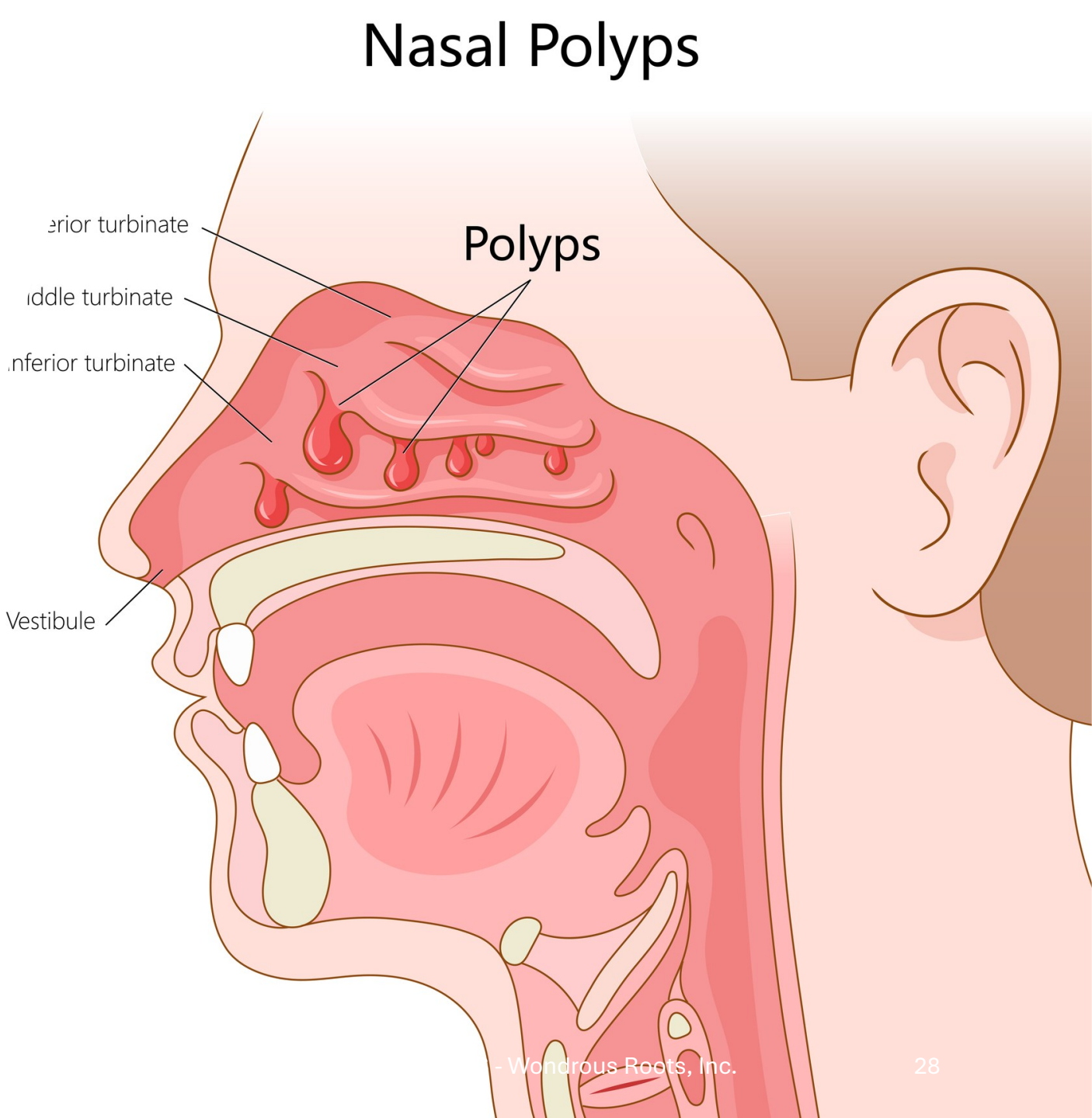
Structural Problems: When Anatomy Interferes

Examples:

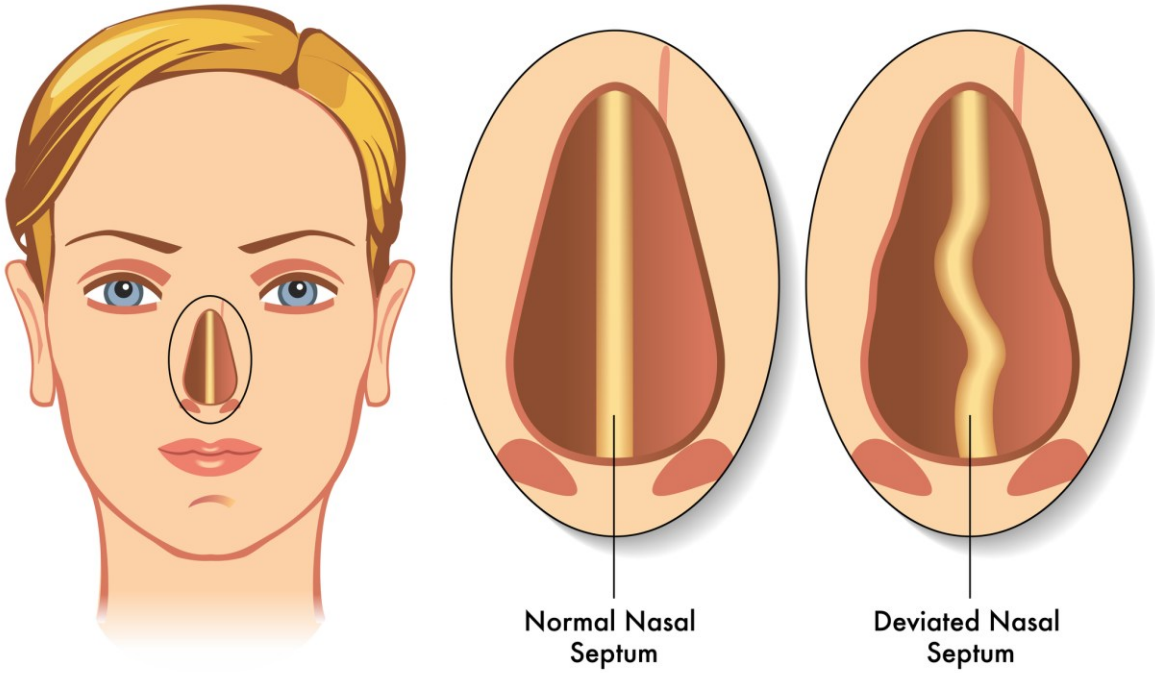
- Deviated septum
- Nasal polyps
- Chronic turbinate enlargement

Symptoms:

- Persistent one-sided blockage
- Poor response to typical treatments



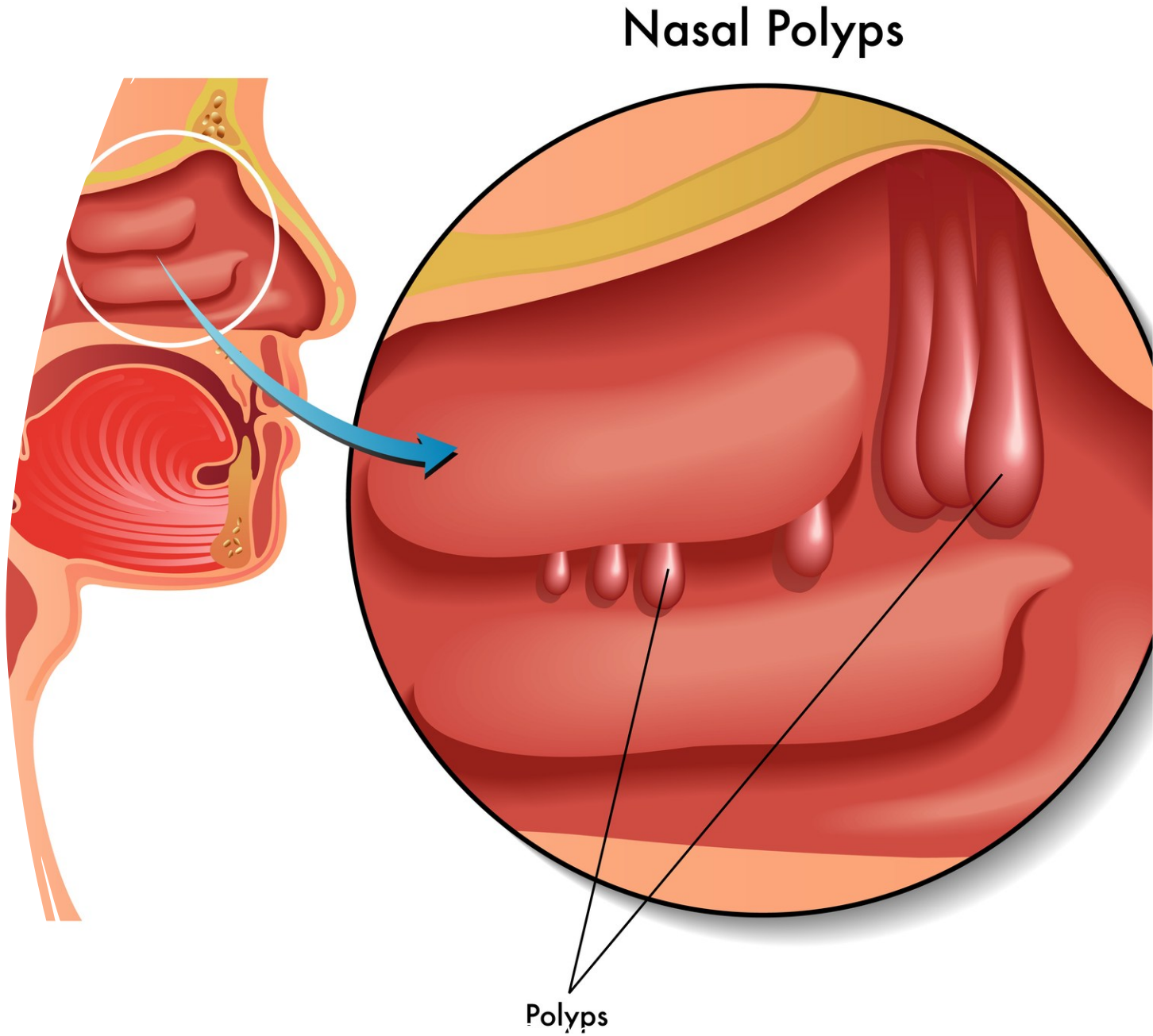
Deviated Septum



A deviated septum occurs when the thin wall dividing the two nasal passages is shifted to one side, which can partially block airflow through the nose. This may be present from birth or result from injury and can lead to chronic congestion, one-sided nasal obstruction, sinus infections, and difficulty breathing, especially during sleep. While mild deviations may go unnoticed, more significant cases can interfere with normal airflow and drainage, sometimes requiring evaluation by an ENT specialist if symptoms are persistent.

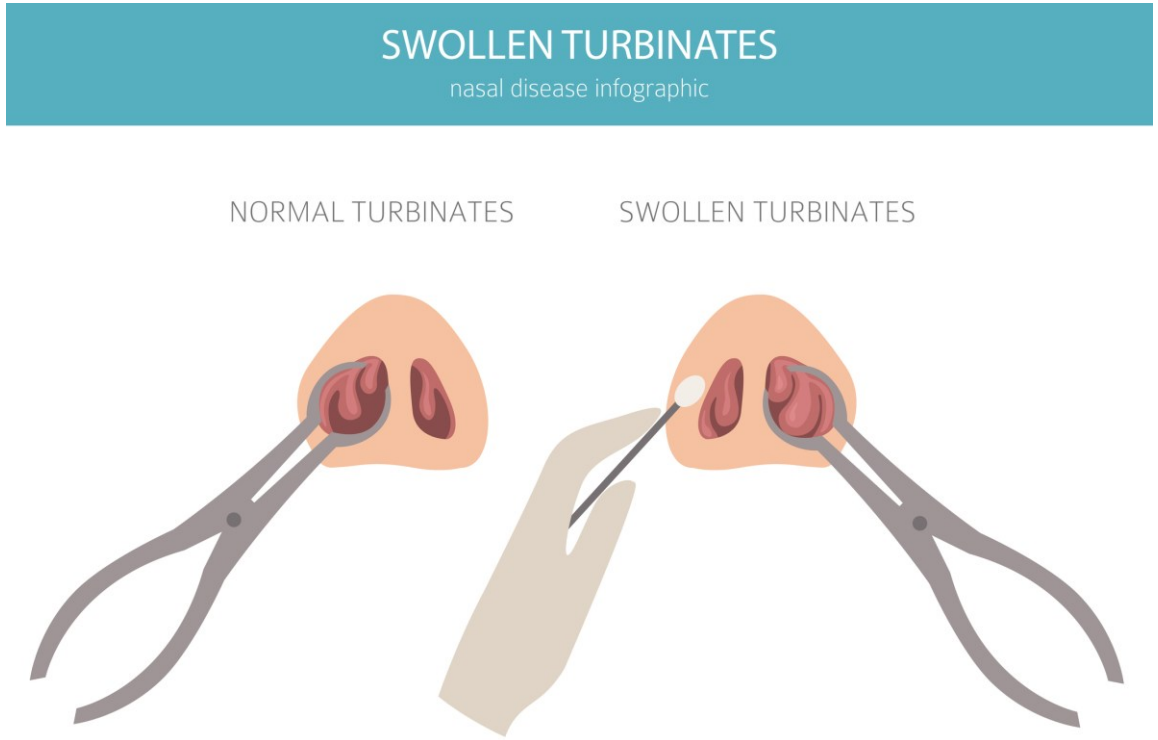
Nasal Polyps

Nasal polyps are soft, noncancerous growths that develop in the lining of the nasal passages or sinuses, often as a result of chronic inflammation. They can vary in size and, when large or numerous, may obstruct airflow, reduce sense of smell, and contribute to ongoing congestion or sinus infections. Polyps are commonly associated with conditions like allergies, asthma, or chronic sinusitis. Addressing underlying inflammation is key, though medical or surgical treatment may be needed in more advanced cases.



Chronic Turbinate Enlargement

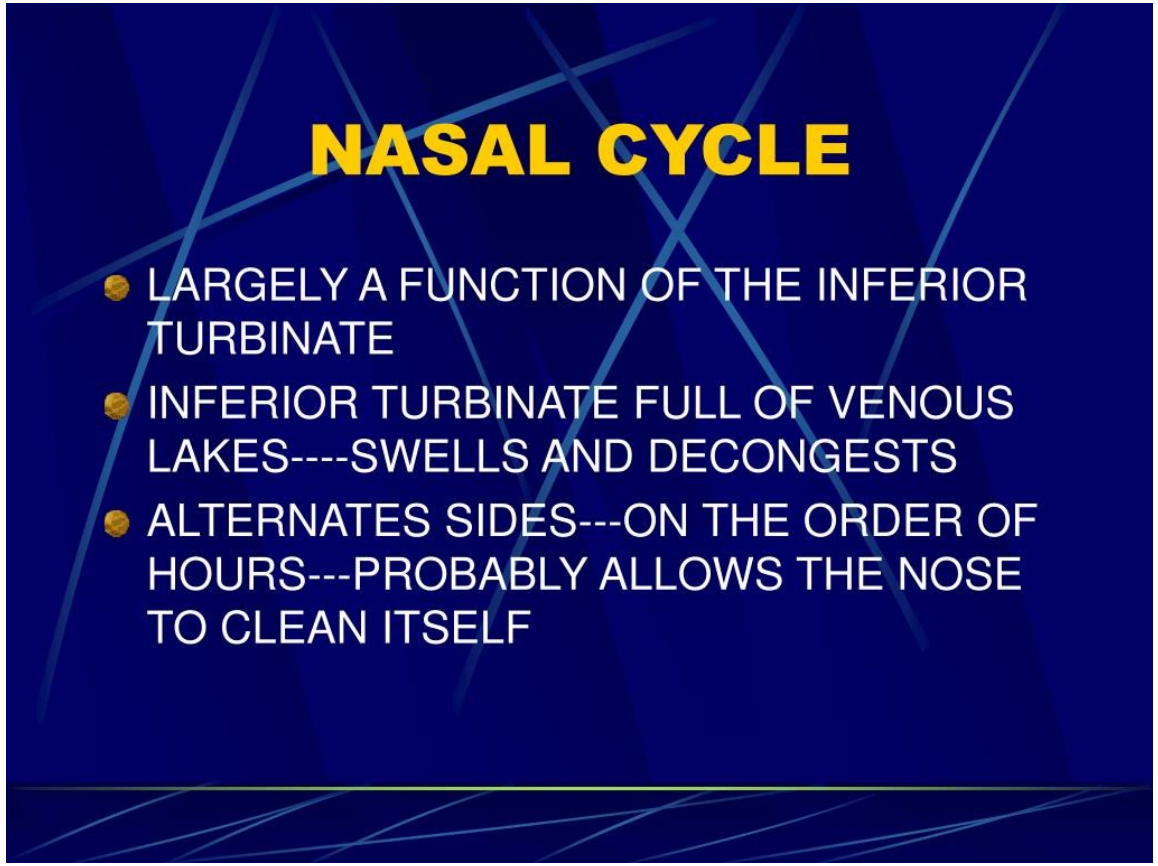
The turbinates are structures inside the nose that help warm, humidify, and filter the air we breathe, but when they become chronically enlarged (often due to allergies or ongoing irritation), they can significantly narrow the nasal airway. This can lead to persistent congestion, difficulty breathing through the nose, and a sensation of constant blockage despite no visible obstruction. Unlike temporary swelling from a cold, turbinate enlargement can become a long-term issue, often requiring both anti-inflammatory support and, in some cases, medical intervention to restore proper airflow.



The Nasal Cycle and Turbinate Swelling

It’s important to understand that everyone experiences a natural process known as the **nasal cycle**. During this cycle, the turbinates on one side of your nose swell while those on the other side shrink. This cycle alternates between the two sides of the nose and typically goes unnoticed.

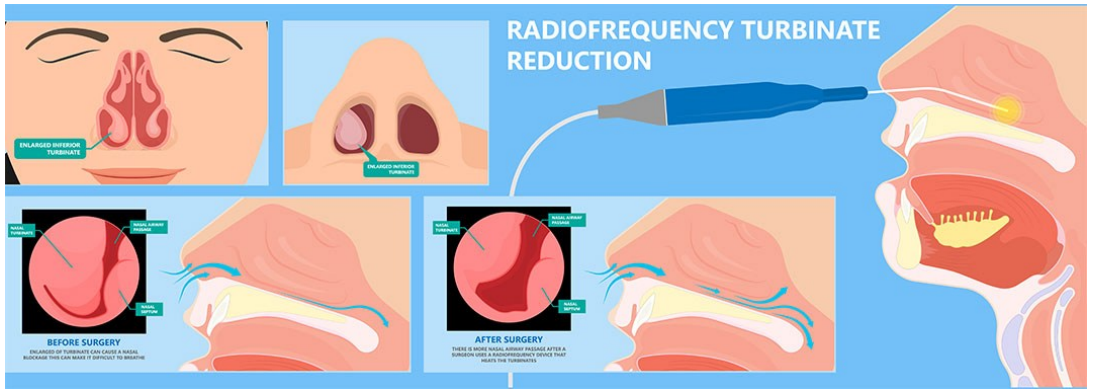
However, during sleep, you might become more aware of this process, especially when you turn over. The side of your nose closest to the pillow may experience more swelling of the turbinates, leading to temporary congestion in that nostril. This is a completely natural phenomenon and usually resolves when the cycle switches to the other side. People with conditions like a deviated septum may notice this more, as one nostril is already narrower, making the swelling more pronounced.



How Do You Treat Swollen Turbinates?

When turbinates remain swollen and cause significant symptoms, medical or surgical therapy may be necessary.

- **Medical therapy** often includes nasal steroid sprays, antihistamines, or decongestants to manage inflammation.
- **Surgical options** may be considered if medical therapy is ineffective. Procedures like turbinoplasty or radiofrequency ablation can reduce the size of the turbinates, providing more permanent relief.



Pediatric Focus: Adenoids & Mouth Breathing

What's going wrong:

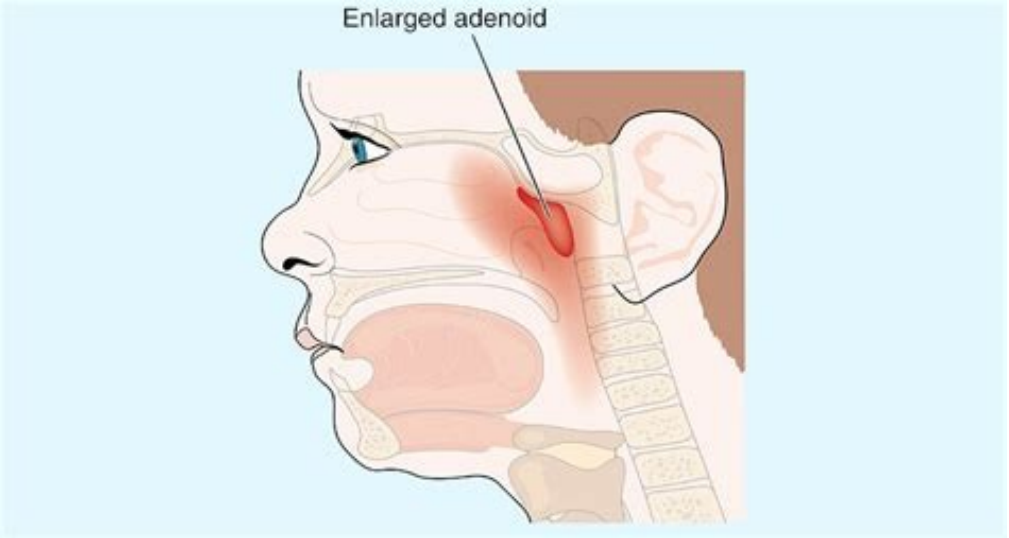
- Enlarged adenoids block nasal airway

Consequences:

- Mouth breathing
- Poor sleep
- Facial development changes
- Increased infections

Adenoids – Purpose and Common Enlargement in Children

The adenoids are a patch of immune tissue located at the back of the nasal passage, where they help monitor and respond to inhaled pathogens, especially in early childhood when the immune system is still developing. They play a protective role by trapping bacteria and viruses entering through the nose. However, in children, the adenoids often grow more rapidly than the surrounding structures of the head and airway, which can lead to partial blockage of the nasal passage. This is why enlarged adenoids are relatively common in young children and can contribute to mouth breathing, snoring, disrupted sleep, and recurrent infections. Over time, as the child grows, the airway enlarges and the adenoids typically shrink, often reducing symptoms naturally.



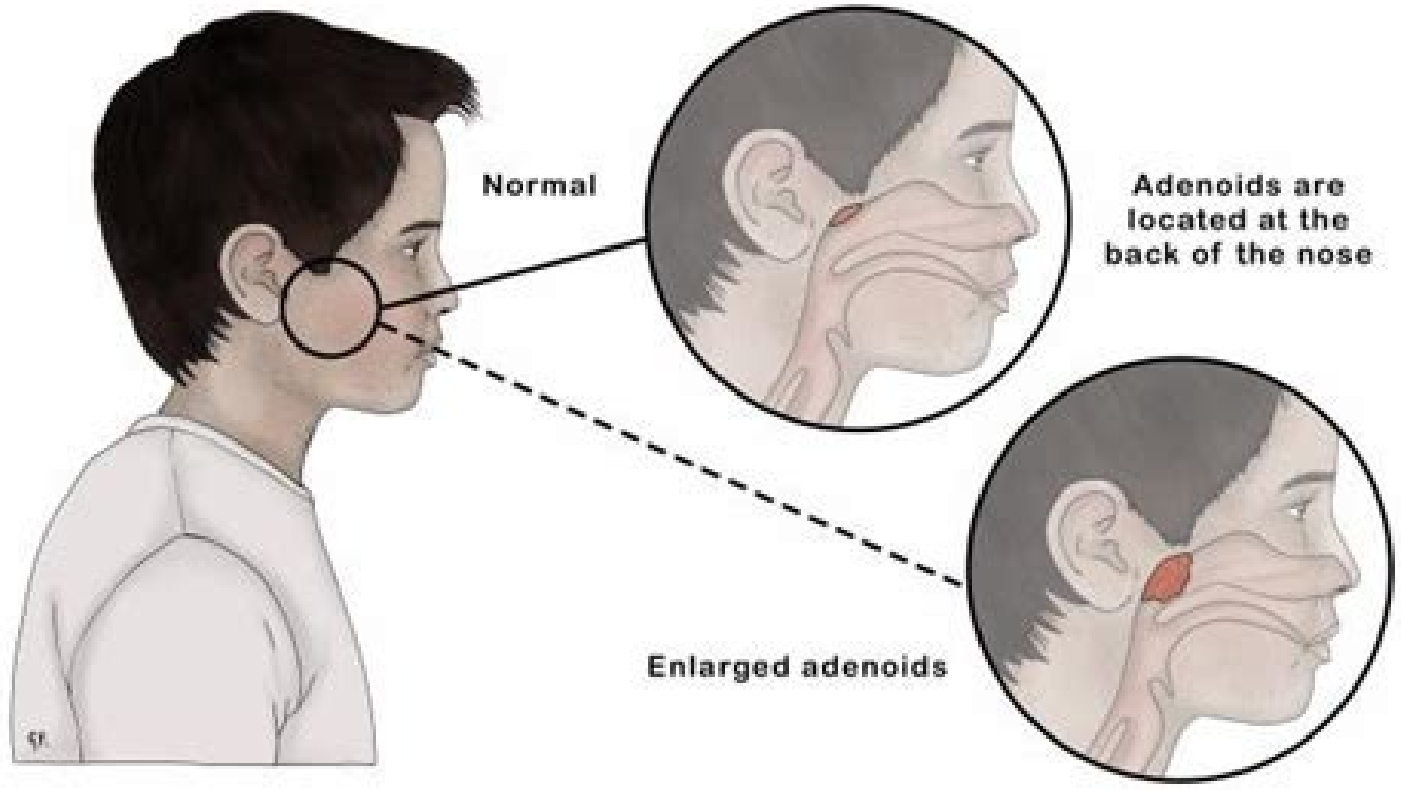
Support Strategies

Conventional:

- Monitoring vs. adenoidectomy

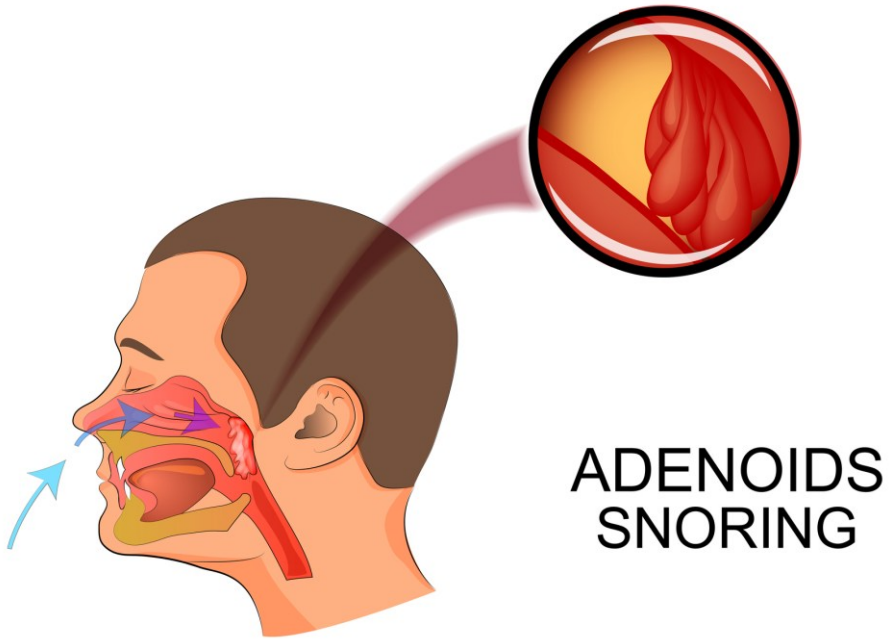
Holistic:

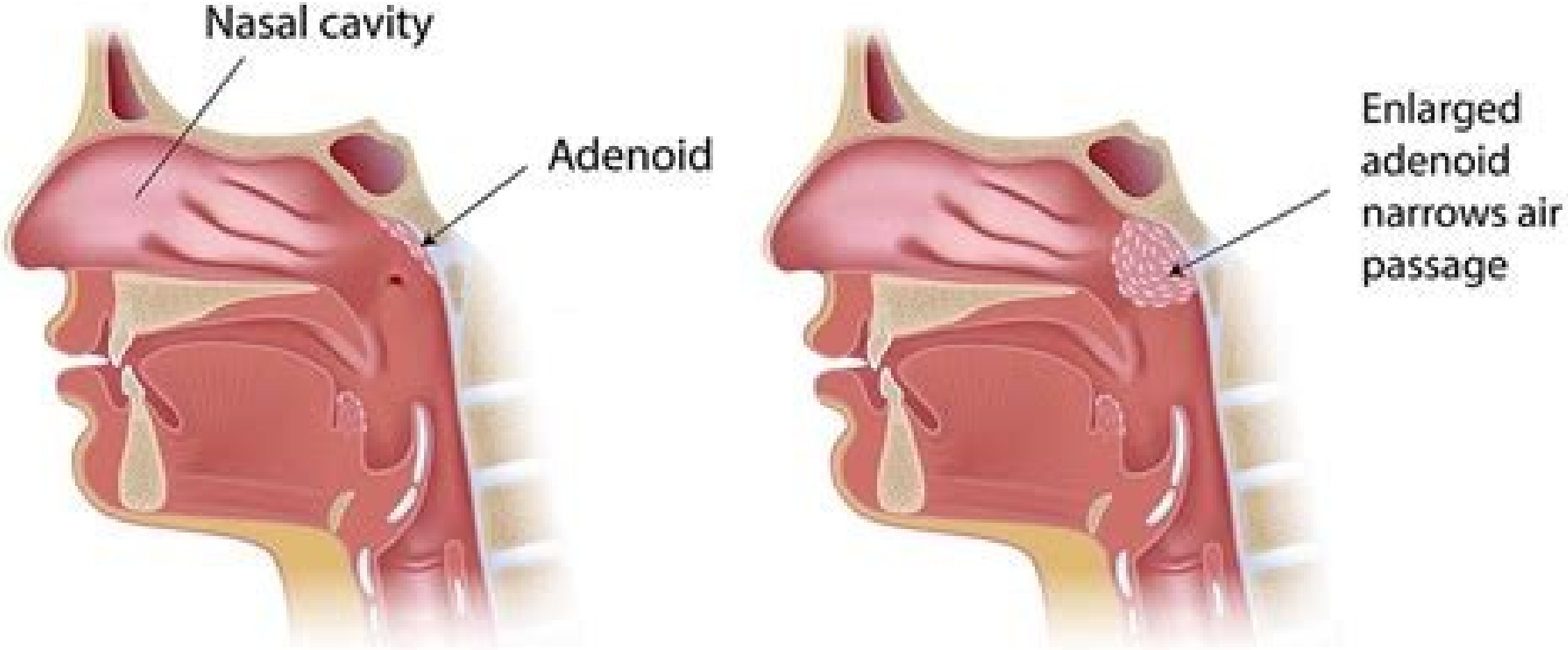
- Address chronic inflammation
- Immune support
- Nasal hygiene (age-appropriate)
- Encourage nasal breathing habits



Enlarged Adenoids in Adults – A Less Common but Overlooked Cause

Although adenoids typically shrink after childhood, they can persist or become enlarged in some adults, often due to chronic inflammation, allergies, or recurrent infections. When enlarged, they can obstruct airflow at the back of the nasal passage, contributing to snoring, mouth breathing, and impaired respiration during sleep. This can reduce sleep quality and, in some cases, play a role in sleep-disordered breathing. Because adenoid-related obstruction is less commonly considered in adults, it may be overlooked, making evaluation important when symptoms are persistent despite other treatments.




Nasal cavity
Adenoid
Enlarged adenoid narrows air passage

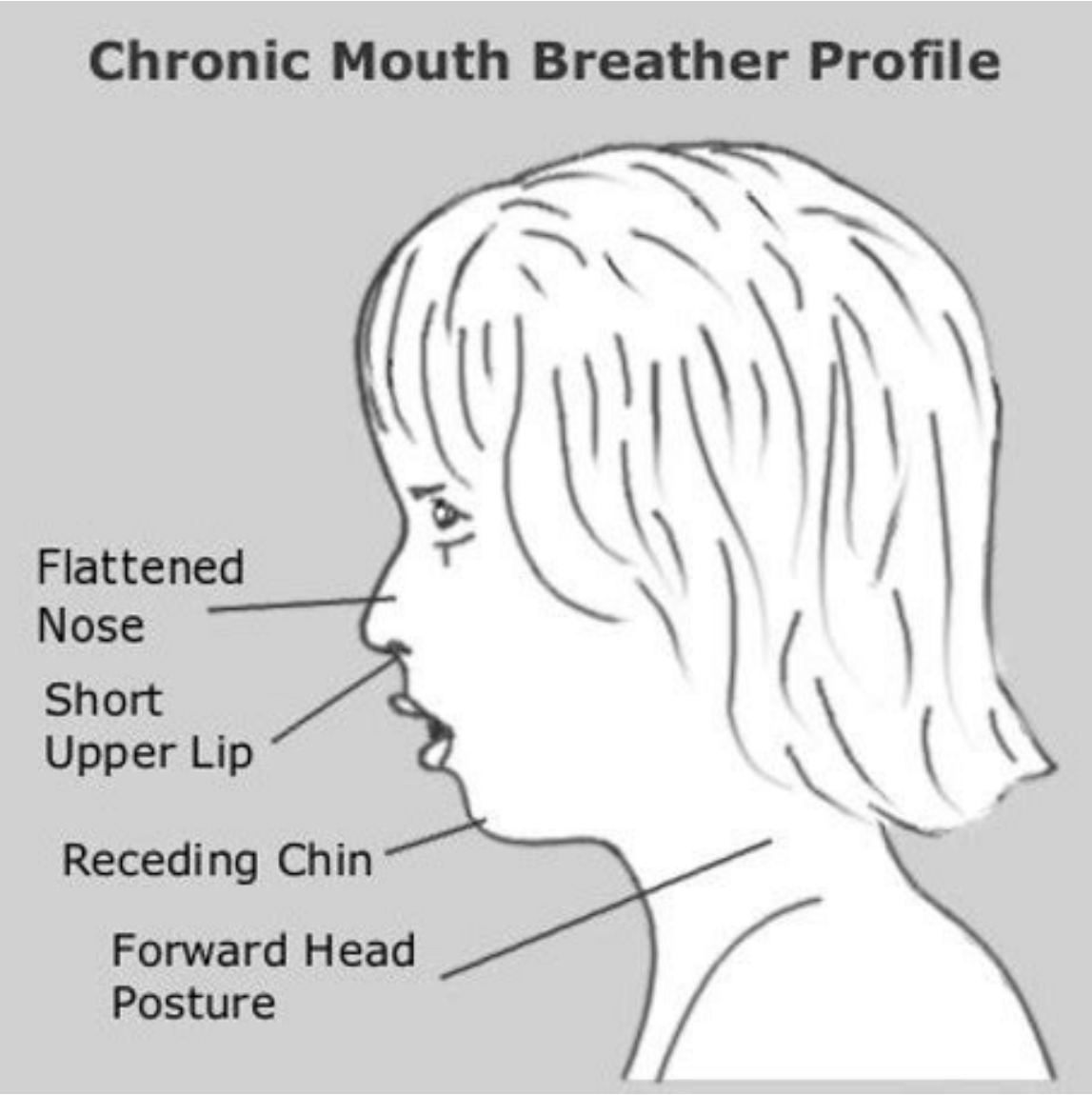
Mouth Breathing: The Downstream Problem

Why it matters:

- Alters oxygen/carbon dioxide balance
- Affects sleep quality
- Impacts dental and facial structure

Support Strategies:

- Nasal clearing first (always)
- Gentle retraining (especially in kids)
- Sleep positioning
- Address root causes—not just the habit



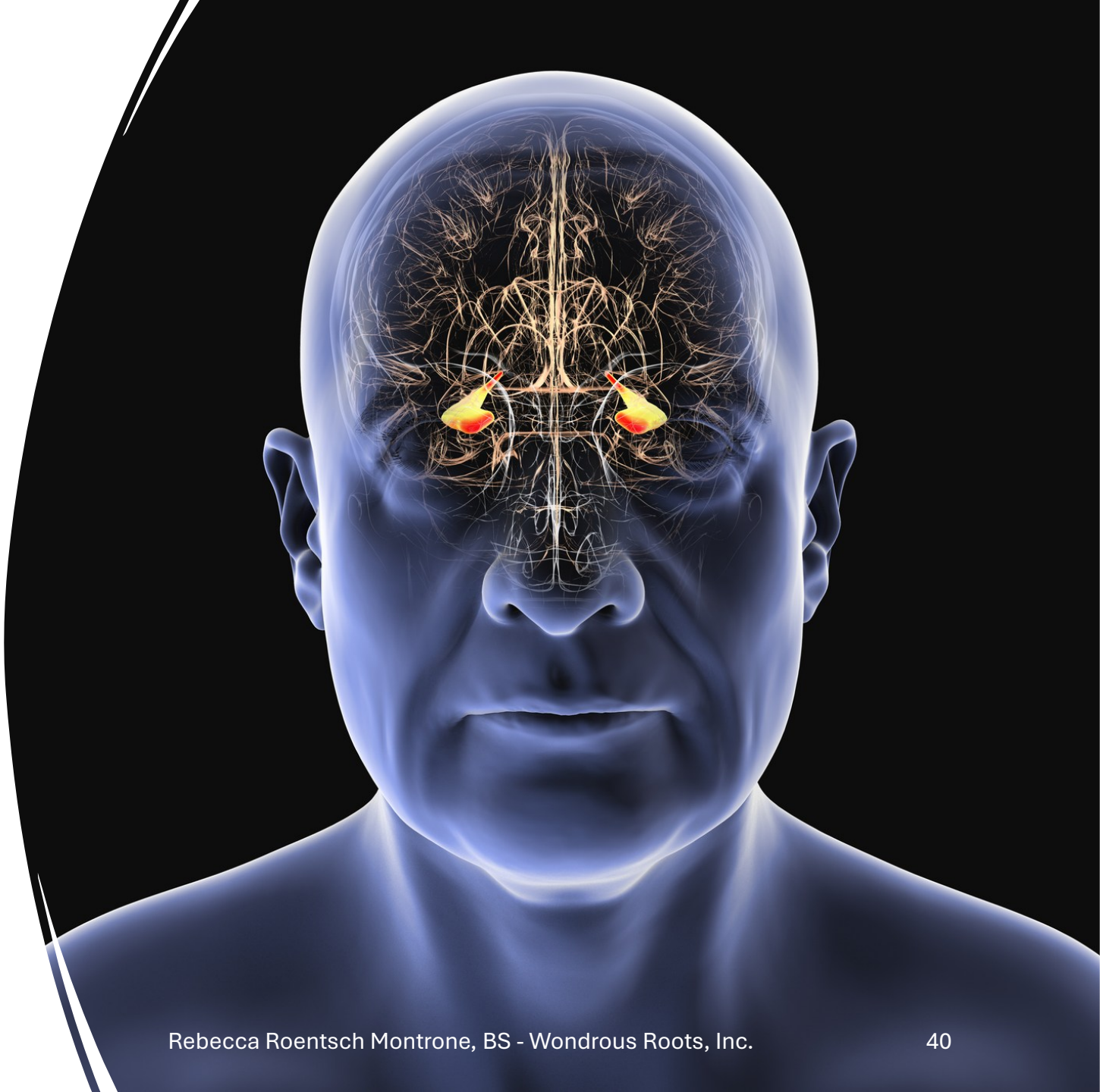
Neurological & Systemic Contributors

What's going wrong:

- Poor signaling rather than blockage

Examples:

- Post-viral nerve dysfunction
- Neurodegenerative conditions (early smell loss)
- Chronic inflammation affecting signaling



Neurons, Nose, and Neurodegenerative Diseases: Olfactory Function and Cognitive Impairment

Olfactory capacity declines with aging, but increasing evidence shows that smell dysfunction is one of the early signs of prodromal neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. The study of olfactory ability and its role in neurodegenerative diseases arouses much interest in the scientific community. In neurology, olfactory impairment is a potential early marker for the onset of neurodegenerative diseases, but the underlying mechanism is poorly understood. The loss of smell is considered a clinical sign of early-stage disease and a marker of the disease's progression and cognitive impairment.

Support Strategies:

- Mitochondrial support
- B vitamins
- Omega-3s
- Glutathione
- Low-dose methylene blue

Environmental & Lifestyle Factors

Contributors:

- Dry air
- Pollutants
- Chemical exposure
- Poor hydration

Support Strategies:

- Humidify air
- Filter air
- Hydrate well
- Reduce irritant exposure

Closing Summary

As we've seen today, when the nose isn't functioning properly, it's rarely just a minor inconvenience. Whether it's congestion, impaired drainage, loss of smell, or structural interference, these issues can ripple outward—affecting breathing, sleep, immune function, taste, and even our emotional connection to the world around us.

The encouraging part is that most of these problems are not random or irreversible. They reflect underlying patterns—blockage, inflammation, or disrupted signaling—that we can begin to understand and address. By supporting proper flow, calming inflammation, and restoring normal function, we can often make meaningful improvements using both conventional tools and thoughtful, natural strategies.

The nose may be small, but its impact is far-reaching. And when we take the time to understand how it works—and what happens when it doesn't—we're in a much better position to help the body return to balance.