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Neenah Woman Regains Sense of Smell Following Sinus Surgery

After Suffering Needlessly With Chronic Sinusitis Patient Gets Relief

Neenah, WI. (April 19, 2005) – A Neenah woman’s battle with chronic sinusitis came to a head when she completely lost her sense of smell. Having just celebrated her 35th wedding anniversary, Margaret Prellwitz cannot remember a period of time when she didn’t have sinus problems. “I have been plagued with sinus problems including nasal congestion and drainage for my entire life. The entire year before my surgery I was unable to smell, congested, my nose ran constantly and I could not breathe. The situation just kept getting worse and worse. After several appointments with my family physician, X-rays revealed that my nasal passages were blocked,” commented Margaret.

More than 37 million Americans suffer from at least one episode of acute sinusitis every year. Sinus problems cross all generations affecting men and women equally. In Wisconsin, physicians report seeing more sinus problems during the winter months due to a greater number of patients suffering from colds.

Margaret was no exception. Over a two-year period, Prellwitz was treated with a variety of antibiotics and steroids in an attempt to clear up her chronic sinusitis. However, none of those treatments were successful for more than short periods of time and Prellwitz continued to feel miserable and frustrated with no relief in sight. “I knew I couldn’t continue to live this way so my family physician referred me to Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists of Wisconsin,” Margaret stated.

After taking Margaret's medical history, Dr. Keller performed an endoscopic examination of Margaret's nose. This procedure is typically done by placing a telescope in the nose to let the physician see what sinuses are involved and where the polyps are located. A routine CT scan confirmed that all the sinuses were involved and that she had major polyp disease. "Dr. Keller said I had the worst sinuses he had ever seen!" Margaret said.

Dr. Keller commented, "Margaret had multiple polyps causing considerable drainage and mucus in her nose. In addition, she also had a deviated septum which meant the cartilage in the nose was crooked and partially blocking one side of her nose. The deviated septum was also placing additional pressure on her sinus openings preventing proper drainage. Furthermore, one particular area in Margaret's nose called the middle turbinate had a big sinus cell inside of it which also contributed to her sinus obstruction."

Sinus surgery was recommended to remove Margaret's polyps and restore sinus function. "Margaret's surgery was fairly lengthy since she had such extensive disease. The polyps were removed with an instrument that uses suction and a rotating blade to precisely remove the polyps. The goal is to enlarge the natural sinus openings and remove the abnormal disease tissue," stated Dr. Keller. The surgery is usually done on an out-patient basis depending on the overall health of the patient.

Dr. Keller along with Drs. Bechard and Prehn at Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists of Wisconsin often use the Stealth CT Sinus System when performing complicated sinus surgeries. Presently, Theda Clark Regional Medical Center in Neenah and Mercy Medical Center in Oshkosh are the only facilities in the area to have this equipment.

The Stealth CT Sinus System allows the surgeons to navigate within the sinuses. It ensures the accuracy and safety of the procedure allowing the surgeon to maneuver around the base of the skull and eyes to prevent any risk of injury and obtain the best possible results.

Full recovery may take several weeks. Dry blood, mucus, and crusting in the nose may occur, presenting symptoms that are similar to a severe cold or sinus infection. Nasal irrigation or salt water sprays and antibiotic lubricants are usually recommended by the surgeon to facilitate normal sinus activity. Proper post-operative care is essential to prevent scar formation and allow normal healing. The surgeon performing the procedure will generally perform all required follow-up procedures.

Post-operatively Margaret saw Dr. Keller a day or two following surgery to remove the sponge in the sinus cavities to absorb blood. She was seen two weeks later to clean out some blood clots that commonly accumulate after surgery. It is quite common in people who have had polyps surgically removed for the polyps to redevelop. Since the sinus passages have already been opened with surgery, reoccurring polyps can generally be

removed during an office visit. According to Dr. Keller, “Margaret has had some small polyps develop since her surgery, but they have been removed during routine office visits. However, Margaret will need routine follow-up care and continue to use her nasal spray which should help to keep those polyps from enlarging too quickly.”

Whether or not polyps develop following sinus surgery generally depends on how severe the patient’s surgery is. Most patients who have sinus surgery do not have a second procedure. In younger patients who have extensive polyps the odds are fairly high that some day they may need some sort of revision surgery. In most instances, the second procedure is not as extensive as the first surgery since the sinuses are already opened.

The surgeons at Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists of Wisconsin explore all options before recommending surgery to their patients and evaluate each patient on an individual basis. Most patients who have sinus surgeries have had problems for months if not years.

“Dr. Keller and the staff at Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists all made me feel comfortable. I can’t describe how wonderful it is to be able to breathe well. People need to realize that they don’t have to live with sinus problems. The sinus surgery truly changed my life for the better,” Margaret said with a smile.

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The board certified surgeons and staff at Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists of Wisconsin have extensive experience in treating head and neck problems for the entire family. For a complete listing of services and office locations, visit www.entwis.com or to schedule an appointment with one of the physicians, call 920-303-4130 or 1-800-435-4851.