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NASAL SALINE IRRIGATION FOR THE NOSE

What are nasal saline irrigations?

While it may be only salt water, saline irrigations in the nose are actually effective as an adjunct to treatment of sinus and nasal complaints. Nasal saline rinses are thought to work primarily by clearing mucus and crusting, but they also provide moisture to the nasal and sinus passages. Saline irrigations may also work by improving the function of the lining of the sinuses and by removal of allergens, bacteria or other inflammatory agents. While there is no evidence that saline replaces standard medical therapies such as topical steroids or antibiotics, studies have demonstrated the benefits of saline irrigations in improving the symptoms of sinusitis.

How do I make the solution?

Pharmacies carry a variety of over-the-counter nasal saline devices which are easy to use and well-tolerated. An 8-ounce squeeze bottle (e.g. Neilmed) or the Neti pot (a teapot-shaped container) are recommended since they deliver large volumes of saline at low pressures. Both are better than saline sprays for improving chronic sinus symptoms because more saline reaches the sinuses to soothe the nasal tissue and flush out the mucus. These commercially available sinus rinses already come with a pre-made solution. However, it is easy to make your own if desired. Boil tap water for several minutes and place in a clean one liter (1 quart) container. Add 2-3 teaspoons of table salt. For stuffy noses, also add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda (not baking powder). Let cool to room temperature before use.

How do I irrigate my nose?

Irrigate each nostril with $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the solution. Perform the irrigations while leaning forward over a sink. Place the tip of the device at the opening of the nostril and gently irrigate the solution into the nose.

Helpful tips:

1. Breathe through your mouth or hold your breath while flushing.
2. Stop irrigating if you have to sneeze or cough.
3. Do not speak or swallow while flushing. This could change the pressure in your ears/nose and cause infectious material to be drawn into the middle ear/sinuses.
4. At first, you may have an aversion to doing the irrigations, much like touching the eye when first learning to wear contact lenses. After a while, this will subside, and you will be able to tolerate irrigation quite easily.



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How do I clean the equipment?

You should clean the irrigation device and solution container daily with soap and water so bacteria are not reintroduced into the nasal cavity with irrigation. Sterilization may be performed once a week with a diluted solution of bleach and water (1 part bleach to 100 parts water). Rinse thoroughly. Allow the device to completely dry before using again.