



EAR, NOSE, & THROAT CENTER OF THE OZARKS

Irrigating Your Nose and Sinuses with Saline

Introduction:

To improve the condition of your nose and sinuses, you have been advised to irrigate with a saline (saltwater) solution. This will help clean the nose and sinuses by clearing irritants, thick mucous, and other materials. If instructed to irrigate your nose, it is important to do this on a consistent daily basis to maximize the beneficial effect and, in some cases, to increase the effectiveness of other nasal medications that you might have been prescribed.

Step 1:

Wash your hands with soap and dry with a clean towel before gathering your irrigation supplies.

Step 2:

You will need the following supplies:

- 1) Sinus irrigation bottle or syringe
- 2) Salt (non-iodized salt may be better tolerated; if available, dead sea salt might have some added benefits)
- 3) Clean room-temperature water
- 4) Baking soda (optional)

Step 3:

To prepare the saline solution, mix **one-eighth teaspoon of salt water into eight ounces (1 cup) of water** in a clean container (this makes a solution that is the same degree of saltiness as your tears and other body fluids). If desired, one-eighth teaspoon of plain baking soda may be added for pH balance to counteract excessive stinging which is occasionally encountered by some patients. Prepare a fresh preparation of saline each time you irrigate your nose. Pre-prepared normal (0.9%) saline acquired at a drugstore is also acceptable.

Step 4:

When you first begin, irrigating your nose and sinuses might feel unusual and/or uncomfortable; however, most people quickly adapt and get used to it. To irrigate, engage the tip of a filled irrigation bottle into one nostril while your head is hanging over a sink. With your mouth open, gently squeeze the bottle just firmly enough so that saline flows throughout the nose and sinuses. Usually, this should result in flow out of the opposite nostril and/or the mouth. Once this occurs, remove the bottle from the nose and stop squeezing. You should then repeat in the opposite nostril and alternate back-and-forth until the bottle is empty. Finally, you may gently blow your nose to clear out any excess saline. It is normal to have drops of saline drip from your nose minutes or hours later when tipping the head in various positions. If you were given a prescription nasal spray, it is best to use this after your saline irrigation is completed.

Step 5:

Clean your irrigation bottle regularly with soap and hot water (follow the manufacturer's suggestions). Your irrigation bottle should be replaced every 4-6 weeks.