

Nasal Irrigation

Illini Pediatrics, LLC
Joseph E. Cangas, M.D.
107 N. Main St, Ste 2B
Columbia, IL 62236
(618) 281-HEAL (4325)

Those who suffer from chronic sinusitis or from nasal allergies may want to try one of the most effective methods for clearing out sticky, persistent mucus that clogs sinuses -- nasal irrigation.

Nasal irrigation is a procedure that uses a saline solution to cleanse the nasal passages. It helps do the following:

- Clear out sticky, persistent mucus.
- Temporarily reduce symptoms of post nasal drainage.
- Help reduce nasal congestion.
- Cleanse and rid the nostrils of pollen and other irritants or contaminants.
- Relieve nasal dryness.
- Improve breathing.
- Reduce cough caused by post nasal drip.

The Saline Solution

A saline solution for irrigation is easy to make. To make an isotonic solution (one similar to the salt content of your bodily fluids), mix 1/4-teaspoon salt in an 8-ounce glass of warm water and add a pinch (1/4-tsp.) of baking soda. Discard any unused solution.

You may choose to use filtered or distilled water if your water contains a lot of chemicals. Table salt can be used, but many prefer to use non-iodized canning or pickling salt.

If you do not want to make your own solution, you can also purchase sterile saline at your local pharmacy or grocery store. You can find it in the contact lens care section of the store. The purchased solutions, however, do not contain baking soda. Using baking soda improves the mucus-solvent properties of the solution.

Different Ways to Irrigate the Nasal Passages

Once the saline solution is ready, it needs to be put in some sort of container that can be inserted in the nostril. That is, if you don't want to snuff the solution out of your hand. Here are a few containers that work for irrigation:

- High capacity syringes - ear or nose
- Neti pot
- Nose spray bottles
- A straw
- Grossan Sinus Irrigator Tip - a Water Pik attachment

The container should allow a continuous flow of saline solution to pass from one nostril to the next.

How To Irrigate Your Sinuses

This is the trickiest part. Even though it is easy, it is awkward until you get used to it. Once you have the solution in a container:

- Lower your head over a sink.
- Turn your neck so your left nostril is down.
- Keep your nose slightly higher than your mouth.
- Pour solution from the container into your right nostril.
- Water will drain from your left nostril into the sink.
- Gently blow your nose.
- Repeat if needed.
- Repeat the same process for other nostril.

To keep the solution from running into your mouth, breathe continuously through your mouth.

How Often Should It Be Used

Nasal irrigation is not addictive and is safe for everyone no matter how long it is used or how often. For best results, it should be used once or twice a day.