

Rinsing out your nose with salt water

Why should I rinse my nose with salt water? — Rinsing out your nose with salt water can wash dirt and mucus from your nose. It also helps wash away things that trigger allergies, such as pollen, mold spores, and dust.

Rinsing out your nose with salt water is also called “nasal irrigation.”

Your doctor might recommend that you rinse out your nose with salt water when you have:

- A stuffy or runny nose from a cold or allergies
- Post-nasal drip – This happens when mucus from your nose drips down the back of your throat.
- Sinusitis – This condition causes mucus, a stuffy nose, and pain in the face.

How do I make the salt water? — To make the salt water solution, follow these steps:

- 1) Find a clean, 1-quart glass jar with a lid. Fill it with distilled water or tap water that has been boiled and cooled. This is important because a few people have gotten serious infections from using tap water that was not clean. These infections are very rare, but it’s better to be absolutely safe.
- 2) You can buy premixed packets for making the solution at a drug store or you can make your own. To make your own, use 1 teaspoon of baking soda and 1 to 1.5 teaspoons of salt. Use pickling or canning salt, which is very pure and dissolves easily. Do not use regular table salt because it contains other chemicals besides salt.
- 3) Mix and store at room temperature for up to 1 week. Throw out any salt water that you don’t use within a week.

How do I get the solution inside my nose? — There are several products you can use to squirt the solution into your nose. These are made for this purpose. Some examples include:

- A squeeze bottle (sample brand name: Neil Med Sinus Rinse)
- A neti pot (sample brand name: Neil Med NasaFlo Neti Pot) – This is a small pot with a long spout, similar to a teapot.
- A nasal irrigation syringe (sample brand name: Nasaline) – Use a 60 cc (2 ounce) syringe, not a bulb syringe for a baby.
- A pulsating irrigation device (sample brand names: Grossan HydroPulse, Waterpik Sinusense Water Pulsator) – These are battery-powered devices that send a gentle pulse of water into the nose. Make sure to get one with a nasal irrigation tip.

If you are using a syringe, pour the amount of fluid you plan to use into a clean bowl, or pour it directly into the squeeze bottle or neti pot. DO NOT put your used syringe back into the storage container. If you like, you can warm the solution slightly in the microwave. This might make the rinsing process more comfortable. But be sure that the solution is NOT HOT.

Bend over the sink with your head turned slightly to one side and squirt the solution into the nostril that is higher. You can also do this in the shower. Aim the stream toward the back of your head, NOT the top of your head. Keep your mouth open. The solution should flow into one nostril and out the other. It’s fine if you swallow a small amount. You might feel a little burning sensation the first few times you rinse out your nose. This usually goes away after you get used to it.

Once all the solution has run out of your nose, blow your nose gently. Some salt water might drain out of your nose over the next few minutes if you bend over. If some salt water seems to

get trapped up in your sinuses, you can bend forward and look upwards toward one side, as if you are “looking under the sink.” Do this looking in one direction, then stand up straight, then in the other direction. When you stand up, some extra salt water might drain out.

Clean your device after each use, either with boiling water or as instructed by the makers of the device. Let it air-dry or dry it with a clean towel.

How often should I rinse out my nose with salt water? — Some people rinse out their nose every day. Others rinse only when they have symptoms. You can safely rinse out your nose a few times per day.

Doctors recommend daily rinsing for people with sinusitis that lasts more than 3 months (called “chronic sinusitis”.)

If you use nasal sprays to treat your symptoms, use them after your rinse out your nose.

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