Nasal Wash or Irrigation

Many people with asthma or other lung problems also have nasal and sinus symptoms. Drainage from your nose and sinuses can make asthma worse, especially at night. A saltwater nasal wash, or nasal irrigation, can help reduce this. *(Please read this entire document before beginning any procedure.)*

Benefits of nasal wash:

- Cleans mucus from the nose, so medication can be more effective
- Cleans allergens and irritants from the nose, reducing their impact
- Cleans bacteria and viruses from the nose, decreasing infections
- Decreases swelling in the nose and increases airflow

Preparation:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Make the nasal wash solution using a clean eight-ounce glass.
   - You may use:
     - Distilled water
     - Sterilized water
     - Boiled tap or well water for one minute (at elevations above 6,500 ft., boil for three minutes) and cooled
     - Tap water that is filtered using a filter with an absolute pore size of one micron or smaller.
   - To make the saltwater solution:
     - Mix 1/2 teaspoon noniodized (iodized is irritating) salt in an 8-ounce glass of water.
     - Add 1/8 teaspoon of baking soda to decrease the sting.
3. Amount of nasal wash to Flush:
   - If you are congested, use the entire 8 ounces
   - All other, four ounces should be enough.
4. Discard any unused saltwater and prepare a new saltwater solution before the next nasal wash.
5. Position for the nasal wash:
   - Adults and older children—Lean far over the sink with your head down and mouth open without holding the breath.
   - Younger children—If possible, have your child lean as far over the sink as possible. A small child may have trouble cooperating with a nasal wash, and may need to be held or wrapped in a towel or blanket with hands at the sides and assisted.
6. Perform the nasal wash.

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Adults and Older Children

Sinus Rinse Kit Technique (preferred technique)

The Sinus Rinse Kit comes with a Sinus Rinse bottle and mixture packets. Either use the prepared mixture packets or making your own nasal wash solution, The Sinus Rinse bottle is filled with warm saltwater or if using pre-made packet, after pouring content, cover the top and shake to dissolve the mixture. The bottle is placed against one nostril and while the bottle is squeezed, saltwater comes out the opposite nostril and may come out the mouth. Leaning slightly forward, the nose is then blown gently without pinching the nose completely before being repeated with the other nostril.

Helpful Videos

Adult Nasal Wash Video

Pediatric Nasal Wash

Bulb Syringe Technique (alternate technique)

Use a large all-rubber ear syringe and fill the syringe completely with the saltwater. Insert the syringe tip just inside your nostril, and pinch your nostril around the tip of the bulb syringe to keep the solution from running out your nose. Gently squeeze the bulb to swish the solution around in your nose; then blow your nose lightly. Repeat the procedure with the other nostril.

Waterpik® Technique (alternate technique) with a Sinus Irrigator Tip

Pour the saltwater into the water reservoir and set the Waterpik at the lowest possible pressure. Insert the tip just inside your nostril, and allow the fluid to run out of your mouth or other nostril. Blow your nose lightly. Repeat the procedure with the other nostril.

Hand Technique (alternate technique)

Use your hands for this technique. Pour some saltwater into your palm. Sniff the liquid up your nose, one nostril at a time. Blow your nose lightly. This technique may not be as effective, but may be used in some situations.

Ask your health care provider to discuss which of these techniques may be best for you.

Babies

Nasadrops™—Place a small amount of the saltwater in your baby's nostril. Use a bulb syringe to suction the mucus from your baby's nose. Repeat the procedure with the other nostril. Ask your health care provider to show you how to do this.

With any technique, the saltwater solution may get into the mouth during the nasal wash and leave a salty taste. You may want to rinse the mouth with water after the nasal wash.

Cleaning the Equipment

- To prevent germs from entering the body during the rinse, cleaning the equipment is required after each use.
- Use distilled, sterile or boiled water.
- Each family member is to have his/her own bulb syringe or nasal adaptor.

Cleaning the Sinus Rinse Bottle

- Place a drop of dishwashing detergent in the bottle, add water, and screw on cap with the tube onto the bottle. Cover the hole on the top and shake the bottle. Pour out the solution and rinse bottle, tubing and cap with water. Shake off any excess water and allow the pieces to dry on paper towel. Do not re-use soap solution or paper towel after each cleaning.

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- If bottle looks strange or has an odor (contaminated): Clean the bottle, cap and tubing in the same manner but with rubbing (70 percent isopropyl) alcohol or white, distilled vinegar (one part vinegar to three parts water). You may also place the bottle tubing and cap in the microwave for one and a half to two minutes.
- The sinus rinse bottle is not dishwasher safe.
- Replace the sinus rinse bottle every three months or if it becomes discolored.

Cleaning the Waterpik

- Refer to the package insert for cleaning directions.

Cleaning the bulb syringe (dropper, syringe or nasal spray bottle)

- Fill the bulb syringe with water, swish the water around and empty the syringe completely.
- Follow with rubbing (70 percent isopropyl) alcohol using the same process.
- Always suspend the bulb syringe tip-down in a clean glass to allow the bulb syringe to drain completely.

If you have any questions about these nasal wash techniques, please ask your health care provider. Your health care provider can discuss which technique is best for you.

Adapted from The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, National Jewish Health and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW).