

Nasal Saline Irrigation

Recipe for hypertonic saline (saltwater) for home nasal wash:

- 1 Liter (quart) of warm water (distilled is preferred). Boiled water can be substituted.
- 2-3 heaping teaspoons of salt (try NOT to use table salt as it contains a large number of additives including iodine, preservatives and sugar. Use a canning, pickling or "sea salt", as these have few additives).
- 1 teaspoon of Arm & Hammertm Baking Soda (pure bicarbonate).

Nose can be irrigated 2 or 3 times per day using a bulb irrigation syringe, large medical syringe, or a special irrigator tip for the Water Piktm.

Technique

Lukewarm saltwater is preferred as it is much more comfortable. The amount of salt added will depend on your tolerance. The bicarbonate is a buffer and will allow the saltwater to be less irritating.

Stand over a sink/tub and squirt the saltwater into the nose in such a fashion that you are able to spit some of the saline out of your mouth. This suggests that you are doing an adequate job of irrigation of the entire nose. Aim the stream of saline as though you are trying to squirt the back of your head, NOT the top of your head. It is acceptable to breathe the saltwater directly into the nose.

The benefits of hypertonic saline irrigation are threefold

1. It is a solvent. It cleans mucous crusts and other debris from the nasal passages. It decongests the nose. Because of the high salt concentration, fluid is pulled out of the mucous membranes. This shrinks the membrane, which improves nasal air flow and opens the sinus passages.
2. It improves nasal drainage. Studies have shown that saltwater cleansing of the nasal membranes improves ciliary beating so that normal mucous is transported better from your sinuses through the nose and into the throat.
3. If you are using a nasal steroid, you should always cleanse the nose first with saltwater before utilizing the nasal steroid. The nasal steroid is most effective when sprayed onto clean nasal membranes and it reaches deeper into the nose after cleansing and decongestion.