

Ian A. Cyrus, OM Practitioner

Nasal & Sinus Irrigation

Nasal and sinus irrigation using a saline solution has been used by practitioners of East Asian Medicine to treat sinus problems, colds, allergies, post nasal drip and to counteract the effects of environmental pollution for centuries.

Sinusitis patients in a randomized control trial who flushed their nasal cavity daily with the below saline solution reported fewer headaches as well less sinus pain, pressure, discharge, and congestion and reduced reliance on antibiotics, and nasal sprays at the end of the six (6) month study period. No similarly significant changes were reported for the control group (J. Fam. Pract. 51[12]:1049-55, 2002).

Tools:

A “neti pot” or “bulb syringe” may be used. The neti pot is a ceramic bowl that looks like Alladin’s lamp that may be purchased at Whole Foods Supermarkets or from the Himalayan International Institute of Yoga, Science and Philosophy, RR 1, Box 405, Honesdale, PA 18431-9709, 800-822-4547. Bulb syringes may be purchased at any drug store or pharmacy.

Preparing the saline solution:

1. Kosher salt (a coarse variety) or sea salt may be used:
 - a. One half teaspoon
2. Baking soda:
 - a. One quarter teaspoon
3. 8 ounces of warm water

Mix ingredients in 8 ounces of warm water in a neti pot or in a separate container until completely dissolved then suction into the bulb syringe.

Positioning the head and applying the neti pot or bulb syringe:

1. Turn your head to one side over a sink keeping the forehead at the same height as the chin or slightly higher
2. Gently insert the spout of the neti pot or bulb syringe in the upper nostril so it forms seal. Raise the neti pot or bulb syringe so the solution flows out of the lower nostril. If it drains out of your mouth, lower your forehead in relation to your chin.

3. When the neti pot or bulb syringe is empty, face the sink and exhale vigorously without pinching the nostrils
4. Refill the neti pot or bulb syringe and repeat on the other side. Again, exhale vigorously to clear the nasal passages.

After the nasal wash:

You may need to do a few simple exercises to expel any remaining saline solution from your nose:

1. ***Exhalations:*** Exhale vigorously through both nostrils while holding your head over a sink. Quickly drawing your abdomen toward your spine with each exhalation will make your exhalation more forceful. If you exhale into a tissue, be careful not to pinch the nostrils closed while exhaling.

2. ***Forward Bending:*** Bend forward from the waist far enough so that the top of the head is bending toward the floor. Hold this position for a few seconds then return to standing. Perform this movement with a few vigorous exhalations

Word of caution:

Remember, the nasal and sinus irrigation is not a substitute for medical treatment. Anyone with chronic inflammation of the sinus passages, nasal passages, inner ear, or throat should seek medical attention.