

Nasal Saline Irrigation

Recipe for hypertonic saline (saltwater) for home or office irrigation:

- 1 liter (quart) of warm water (distilled is preferred).
- 2-3 heaping teaspoons of salt. Do **NOT** use table salt as it contains a large number of additives including iodine, preservatives and sugar. Use canning, pickling, or “sea salt”.
- 1 teaspoon of baking soda (pure bicarbonate).

Nose should be irrigated 2-3 times per day with a bulb syringe, large medical syringe or water pick with irrigator tip. Stand over a sink and squirt the salt water 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 irrigating 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.

Warm saltwater is preferred as it is much more comfortable. The amount of salt added will depend on your tolerance. However, the more salt that is added the greater the decongestant effect. The bicarbonate is a buffer and will allow the saltwater to be less irritating.

The benefits of hypertonic saline irrigation are three-fold:

1. It is a solvent. It cleans mucous, crusts, and other debris from the nasal passages.
2. It decongests the nose. Because of the high salt concentration, fluid is pulled out of the mucous membrane. This shrinks the membrane, which improves nasal airflow and opens sinus passages.
3. 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 the sinuses through the nose and into the throat.

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