



Nasal Irrigations

The nasal and sinus cavities are normally able to clear mucus on their own through "mucociliary transport". (See About Your Nose & Sinuses) Up to one quart of mucus is produced daily from your nose and sinuses and is swallowed. Sometimes swelling of the nose from allergy, irritation, or infection can prevent this self-cleaning and allow the accumulation of microbes or irritants. In these cases, irrigations (nasal flushing or washing) are used to assist in mucociliary transport.

Irrigations are typically recommended twice daily but if you are unsure check with your healthcare provider.

Irrigation solutions: A variety of solutions can be used, depending on the nature and degree of material that needs to be cleared out of the nose. Irrigation solutions can be homemade or prescribed.

- **Homemade Salt & Soda Irrigation:**

Use sterile water if possible. If tap water is necessary, boil before using.

Add 1-tsp. salt

½ tsp. baking soda

1-liter (1-quart) sterile/boiled water

Let Cool to room temperature before use. Store in the refrigerator and remove only the portion to be used the following day. Patients on a salt-restricted diet can use plain sterile water. This however may be somewhat irritating to some people.

- **Prescription Irrigations**

These can include antimicrobial agents to inhibit bacterial, fungal, viral growth. If mupirocin, gentamicin, ceftazidime, or amphotericin irrigations are prescribed for you it is best filled by a hospital or compounding pharmacy near your home. Shop around if you find that your local pharmacy is too expensive.

Irrigation Devices: Irrigations may be carried out with a rubber bulb syringe (like the kind used for cleaning children's ears), a "turkey baster", a plunger syringe, or a water-pik device. The "turkey baster" often tie is the most convenient since it can be cleansed in the dishwasher.

Irrigation instructions for patients without prior surgery:

The goal is to rinse both nasal cavities through one nostril by permitting continuous flow of saline solution to pass from one nostril to the other. It is awkward until you get used to it.

- Fill your container with saline
- Lower your head over a sink.
- Turn your neck so your left nostril is down.
- Keep your nose slightly higher than your mouth.
- Pour solution from the container into your right nostril.
- Water will drain from your left nostril into the sink.
- Gently blow your nose.



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- Repeat if needed.
- Repeat the same process for other nostril.
- To keep the solution from running into your mouth, breathe continuously through your mouth.

Irrigation instructions for patients with prior sinus surgery:

The goal is to rinse deep into the nasal cavity as well as the opened sinus cavities (most commonly the maxillary sinuses). It requires flushing both sides separately.

- Fill your container with saline
- Before starting hold your breath to prevent coughing on the rinse.
- Take the tip out of your nose if you have to sneeze or cough to prevent injury.
- Do not speak or swallow during irrigations. This can change the pressure in your ears and nose causing infectious mucus to be drawn into the sinuses or middle ear.
- Hold on to the edge of the sink/shower with one hand so you do not lose your balance.

To irrigate your nose:

- Turn your head to the right side with your ear pointing to the drain of the sink/shower.
- Flush the solution into the right side of your nose.
- While holding your breath slowly rotate your head back and upright.
- Then continue rotating your head down (forward) and counter-clockwise so that your left ear is now facing the drain of the sink/shower.
- Repeat these steps in the opposite direction to flush the left nostril.

Some irrigation solution will run out the front of your nose or down the back of your throat. Although a small amount of this is not harmful if swallowed. Larger amounts may produce bloating or fullness in the abdomen.

Cleaning Your Irrigation Device

Whichever device you use, you should cleanse the apparatus on a daily basis so that bacteria/molds are not re-introduced into the nasal cavity with each irrigation. Cleansing may be performed with a weak solution of Betadine (available in pharmacies as a douche) or bleach (1 part bleach to 100 parts water). After cleansing, flush through a few times with water before using again.