



Instructions for Nasal Saline Irrigation

- ✓ One quart water, preferably distilled
- ✓ Two or three heaping teaspoons of canning/pickling/sea salt. Do not use table salt
- ✓ One teaspoon of pure sodium bicarbonate (i.e. Arm & Hammer baking soda)
- ✓ Bulb syringe (available at local pharmacies) OR
- ✓ Large medical syringe with soft silicone tip

In a large, clean re-sealable container, preferably a bottle or jug, thoroughly mix all the ingredients. Warm water is preferred as it is much more comfortable. The amount of salt added will depend on your tolerance. However, you will experience a greater decongestant effect with a higher concentration of salt. The bicarbonate is a buffer and will make the solution less irritating. One quart of solution should be enough to last all day.

Pour some solution into a clean cup and fill your syringe from it and not the container. This will reduce contaminating the bottle with bacteria from your nose. Standing over a sink or in the shower, tilt your head forward. Angle the tip of the syringe towards the back of your head and gently squeeze the syringe. Do not point the tip towards the top of your head as this might prevent the solution from reaching those areas you most need to irrigate. You do not need to irrigate with great force, as you are not necessarily trying to flush out any crusting or debris, but only to moisten it and the surrounding tissues. Repeat for the other side. If this procedure is performed properly, the solution will not drain down your throat, but out the other side of your nose. Ideally, you should irrigate each side of your nose once or twice, two to three times a day, unless otherwise instructed.

If you have been prescribed a nasal steroid spray such as Flonase or Nasonex, you should always irrigate your nose before using your spray. The medication is most effective and reaches deeper into the nose after cleansing and decongestion.

The benefits of hypertonic saline irrigation are threefold:

1. It is a solvent. It cleans mucous, crusts, and other debris from the nasal passages.
2. It decongests the nose. Because of high salt concentration, fluid is removed from the membrane. This shrinks the tissues, which improves nasal airflow and opens sinus passages.
3. It improves nasal drainage. Studies have shown that saltwater cleansing of the nasal membrane improves ciliary (surface microscopic hair) beating so that normal mucous is transported better from the sinuses through the nose and into the throat.

It is extremely important that you carefully clean and disinfect your syringe after each use. Using a contaminated syringe can result in an infection. Carefully wash and/or flush each part using hot, soapy water followed by rinsing with fresh water. Let it air dry or use a clean dishtowel. If you wish to sterilize your bulb syringe, partially fill it with clean water and place it in a microwave-safe cup also partially filled with water and microwave it on high for one minute. After cooled, carefully empty the syringe and let it dry. Do not store wet syringes.