

NASAL SALINE IRRIGATION

Recipe for hypertonic saline (saltwater) for home irrigation

- 1 quart (liter) of warm water
- 2-3 heaping teaspoons of salt (NOT table salt as it contains a larger number of additives including iodine, preservatives and sugar. Use canning, pickling, or "sea salt" as these have fewer additives.)
- 1 teaspoon of Arm and Hammer Baking Soda (pure bicarbonate)

Nose should be irrigated 2 to 3 times per day with a bulb syringe, large medical syringe or water pik with irrigator tip. Stand over a sink 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 or 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 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 in, the greater the decongestant affect. 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 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 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.

If you are using a nasal steroid, such as Beconase, Vancenase or Nasacort, you should always cleanse the nose first with the 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.