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## Nasal Saline Irrigation

Saline irrigation is a good way to maintain a healthy nose and sinuses. There are several options for nasal rinsing, ranging from the gentle flow of a Neti pot to the pulsed spray of the Grossan nasal irrigator. The exact method you choose should be one with which you are comfortable. The easier and more convenient the method, the more likely you are to use it. The Sinus Rinse® kit, sold here and at drugstores is a simple way to get started.

You may prefer to assemble your own kit, starting with a bulb syringe, or mix your own solution which can be delivered by your method of choice.

If your nose is particularly congested with a cold or allergies, you can improve the irrigation by starting with a decongestant spray, such as Afrin® or Dristan® decongestant. Spray this first, wait about five minutes, then rinse away the spray with your saline. The decongestant spray should not be part of a daily routine, but should be reserved for times when nasal congestion interferes with penetration of the rinse solution.



### Recipe for hypertonic saline (saltwater) for home irrigation:

- 1 liter (quart) of warm water (distilled is preferred)
- 2-3 teaspoons of salt (NOT table salt as it contains a large number of additives including iodine, preservatives, and sugar. Use canning, pickling or “sea salt” as these have few additives)
- 1 teaspoon Arm & Hammer Baking Soda (pure bicarbonate) (optional)

Nose should be irrigated 2-3 times per day with a bulb syringe, large medical syringe, or water pick with irrigator tip (mail order information available in the office). Stand over a sink and squirt the saltwater into the nose in so 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. You should use a large amount of water, without much pressure. 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 affect. The bicarbonate is a buffer and make the saltwater less irritating.

The benefits of hypertonic saline irrigation are three-fold:

It is a solvent. It cleans mucous, crusts, and other debris from the nasal passages.

It decongests the nose. Because of the high salt concentration, fluid is pulled out of the membranes. This shrinks the membranes which improves nasal air flow and opens sinus passages.

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 Rhinocort®, Nasonex®, Flonase®, or Nasacort®, you should 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 decongestions.

Should you have any questions, please call our office.