How To Rinse The Nose With Salt Water

This sheet explains how to rinse your nose or your child’s nose with a special salt water and baking soda mixture. It includes the recipe for making this mixture.

The benefits of rinsing the nose with salt water:

- When you rinse the nose with this salt water and baking soda mixture, you wash crusts and other debris from the nose.
- Salty water pulls fluids out of swollen tissue, which decongests the nose and improves air flow. This makes breathing easier and helps open the sinus passages.
- This salt water and baking soda mixture helps the nose membranes move mucus faster.

The recipe for the salt water and baking soda mixture:

1. Carefully clean a 1-quart glass jar. Rinse well.
2. Fill the clean jar with tap water or bottled water. You do not need to boil the water.
3. Add 2 to 3 heaping teaspoons of pickling or canning salt. Do not use table salt. Table salt has additives you don’t want in your nose rinse. You can ask for pickling salt at the grocery store.
4. Add 1 rounded teaspoon of baking soda (pure bicarbonate).
5. Stir or shake before each use.
6. Store at room temperature.
7. After a week, pour out any mixture that is left and make a new batch.

NOTE: If the mixture seems too strong, use the same amount of baking soda but less salt; try 1½ to 2 teaspoons of salt. For children, start with the smaller amount of salt. Gradually increase to 2 to 3 teaspoons of salt, or whatever your child will accept.

How to rinse the nose:

- Make the salt water and baking soda mixture according to the recipe above.
- Rinse your nose 2 to 3 times a day.
- You may wish to use a bulb or ear syringe, a large medical syringe (30cc) or a Water Pik.
Instructions:

1. Pour some of the mixture into a clean bowl. It is not necessary, but many people like to warm it to about body temperature in a microwave oven. Be sure it is not hot.

2. Fill the syringe or Water Pik with the mixture from the bowl. Do not put your used syringe into the jar with your mixture because it will contaminate your weekly supply.

3. Stand over the sink or in the shower and bend over. Squirt the mixture into each side of your nose. Aim the stream toward the back of your head, not the top of your head. This lets you spit out some of the salt water. Swallowing a little won’t hurt you. (If you bend over a little more it won’t get into your throat.)

Most people notice a mild burning feeling the first few times they use the mixture. This feeling usually goes away in a few days.

For young children:

- You can put the mixture in a small spray container, like a saline spray or nasal steroid spray bottle.
- Squirt into each side of the nose several times.
- Do not force your child to lie down. Rinsing the nose is easier when sitting or standing.

If you use a nasal steroid spray such as Flonase, Vancenase, Beconase, or Nasacort

- Always use the salt water mixture first, then use your nasal steroid spray. The steroid reaches deeper into the nose and sinuses when it is sprayed onto clean, decongested nasal tissues.

If you have questions:

This sheet has explained why and how to rinse the nose with salt water. Please call (573) 817-3000 if you have any additional questions.

Additional Information