



Sinus Irrigation

Sinus irrigation is used to clean the nasal passages and ensure free airflow through both nostrils. It is part of the treatment protocol for nasal congestion, allergies, sinus infections, colds, and many other ailments. Dust, dirt, pollen, and smoke that may irritate nasal mucosa can easily be washed away by this simple procedure.

Porcelain Neti Pots made specifically for nasal wash are available at many grocery stores and pharmacies. NeilMed sinus rinse bottles are another great option that may be easier for some. Rinse bottles are easier to use and may be less messy, but if you have sensitive sinuses, they may be too forceful.

If you are averse to the mess associated with sinus irrigation, you can try doing it in the shower.

Procedure:

1. **Pour warm distilled water into the container.** Water that is too cool may increase congestion, while water that is too hot may cause irritation of the delicate lining of the nose.
2. **Stir pure, non-iodized sea salt into the water until it is completely dissolved.** The amount depends on how finely ground the salt is. Use $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of finely ground salt such as table salt, or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of coarse varieties like kosher or sea salt. The resulting saline solution should not burn. There are also premade packets that are available for purchase at most pharmacies.
 - Note: Your provider may have additional medications they recommend you add to help with specific symptoms or infections.
3. **Rinse one side at a time.** Lean over the sink so that you are over the basin looking forward and down. Insert the spout into the upper nostril until there is a clean seal. Keep your mouth open throughout this process, breathing evenly. The water will drain out through the other nostril. Continue pouring/squeezing until the container is empty.
 - Note: with the traditional Neti Pot you will need to rotate your head to the side so that one nostril is directly above the other. The forehead should remain level with the chin or slightly higher. The upper nostril is the one with the spout in it.
 - Troubleshooting:
 - If you have water coming out of your mouth, work to adjust the position of your head, generally lowering your forehead in relation to your chin.
 - Sometimes you have to allow more time for the water to move through the sinuses and the water will flow slowly or not at all. Do not squeeze rinse bottles harder as this can cause damage.
 - You may notice a difference between one side and the other. Keep track of this over time. If it doesn't work on one side, try switching to the other one and then come back to the side that wasn't allowing flow.

4. **Clear out excess water in the sinuses.** Once the container is empty, exhale vigorously through your nose to clear excess mucus and water. Quickly draw the abdomen toward the spine during each exhalation. If using a tissue, take care not to pinch the nostrils closed while exhaling. Continue until they are both clear.
- **WARNING: Pinching your nostril while exhaling sharply can cause high pressure in the inner ear. Patients have ruptured ear drums doing this.** When letting the sinuses drain, do not try to force clearance of the water. If water doesn't empty easily or at all, consult with your doctor.
 - **Troubleshooting:** It may be necessary to do additional techniques to clear remaining saline solution from your nose.
 - Bend forward, pointing the top of your head towards the floor. Hold for a few seconds then return to standing upright and do some vigorous exhalations through the nose.
 - Stand with feet 2-3 feet apart and arms out to the side. Slowly bend from the waist bringing the right hand to the left knee. Look up at your left hand stretched up towards the ceiling. Hold for a few seconds and repeat on the other side. Return to standing upright and exhale vigorously through the nose.

5. **Repeat the procedure on the other side.**

Reference:

Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy. Neti Pot. Honesdale, PA. 1994.