

Saline Nasal Spray/Flushing

For Nasal Congestion from Allergies, Colds, or Sinuses

Background

The use of salt water flushing of a congested nose has been done for many years. Many people remember a grandmother or other older family member who would use salt water placed on a tea saucer and then inhaled through the nose to help clear out congestion. It continues to be a safe, inexpensive, and very effective method of reducing nasal congestion. It can be used with all other therapies for nasal congestion, whether oral or spray. In fact, the use of saline flushing can sometimes make a prescription program for allergy therapy begin to work where previously it had not. However, it is important to use saline flushing BEFORE using prescription nasal spray so that the medication is not washed out.

Method

Saline nasal spray can be purchased from any drug store. One popular brand is “Ocean Nasal Spray.” Any brand is equivalent and there is no reason to pay much for salt water; generic brands are fine. Often the amount of spray produced by these commercial products is small when we need a good flow, so – if flow is low – open the hole wider with a pin or other tool. We want a good squirt to get adequate saline flow and cleansing.

With the salt water sprayer in hand, place your head over a sink. (Do not follow the directions on the bottle or the results will not be as effective.) Put the sprayer in one nostril and spray the nostril 10-20 times; this will flush out large amounts of mucous and any foreign material which may be causing allergies. This will allow the sinuses to drain, removing congestion and potential infectious material. Then switch nostrils and spray it the same 10-20 times. As you use saline flushing, you will identify what amount of spraying works best and how often it is needed to get the best results for you.

Refilling Saline Sprayer

As you would imagine, this type of large volume spraying will empty the smaller nasal sprayer quite quickly. However, it is not necessary to keep buying new bottles. When the sprayer is low or empty, remove the sprayer top. Separately mix a ½ teaspoon of table salt in 8 oz. of warm water; stir until dissolved. (If some nasal sensitivity develops, it may be due to the iodine in table salt. In that case, regular, non-iodized will prevent that problem.) It is also a good idea to add one “pinch” (the amount you can pick up between your fingers) of regular home baking soda and mix it in the 8 oz. glass with salt water. Then refill the sprayer, put the top back on, and you are ready to go again. Make a new batch of saline each time you refill the sprayer, this reduces infection risk.

Caution

As with any intervention, if pain, discomfort, or problems arise, then stop and let your physician know. Do not continue with this or any treatment which seems to be hurting you.