

NASAL SALINE IRRIGATION

Recipe for hypertonic saline (saltwater) for home or office irrigation:

- 1 liter (quart) of warm water. (distilled is preferred)
- 2-3 heaping teaspoons of salt (**DO NOT USE TABLE SALT** as it contains a large number of additives including iodine, preservatives and sugar.) Use canning, pickling or "sea salt as these have fewer additives
- 1 teaspoon *Arm & Hammer Baking Soda* (pure bicarbonate)
- **IF INDICATED BY YOUR DOCTOR:** also add 1 teaspoon of Betadine per quart of water, or if using a water pik, add 1 teaspoon per reservoir.

Nose should be irrigated 2-3 times per day with a bulb syringe, large medical syringe or Water Pik with irrigator tip (available in our office). 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 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. It is acceptable to breathe the saltwater directly into the nose.

Warm saltwater 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 effect. The bicarbonate is a buffer and will allow the saltwater to be less irritating

The benefits of hypertonic saline irrigation are threefold:

1. *It is a solvent.* It cleans mucus, 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 the sinus passages.
3. *It improves nasal drainage.* Studies have shown that saltwater cleansing of the nasal membranes improves ciliary beating so that normal mucus is transported better from the sinuses through the nose and into the throat.

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