

NASAL SALINE INSTRUCTION SHEET

INTRODUCTION

The function of the nose is to warm, filter, and humidify air and to provide the first line of defense against infection. Nasal saline use on a regular basis can improve nasal function by:

1. Directly removing crusts, secretions and sensitizing agents such as pollens.
2. Directly shrinking mucous membranes thus providing improved sinus ventilation and drainage.
3. Improving the function of the cilia which propel the mucous blanket along the surface of nasal and sinus mucosa.

Nasal saline is inexpensive and has no side effects. The regular use of nasal saline can potentially benefit almost any chronic nasal condition, including allergies, chronic or recurrent sinusitis, and "post-nasal drip." It is best thought of as "preventative medicine" just as regular tooth brushing helps to prevent cavities.

TYPES OF SALINE

The most inexpensive way to use nasal saline is to make it yourself. Approximately 1/4 teaspoon per cup of water makes an approximation to physiologic saline solution (1/4 teaspoon of baking soda may be added if the saline solution causes a burning sensation in the nose). For homemade solutions, sea or Kosher salt is recommended. The water should be filtered, distilled, or boiled and cooled.

Pre-made nasal saline solutions can be purchased over the counter at any pharmacy. Advantages include convenience and potentially more comfort as most manufactured solutions are "pH balanced".

METHOD AND FREQUENCY OF SALINE USAGE

The goal of nasal saline application is to "rinse" both nasal cavities. A squirt in the nostril with or without a gentle "sniff" is adequate.

Some people prefer to use either a "bulb syringe", NeilMed bottle, or Neti pot, which can be purchased at the pharmacy. For the first few months after sinus surgery, this is the preferred method of nasal saline delivery.

The recommended initial frequency for nasal saline use is twice a day. Some people find it beneficial to use the saline more often.

USE WITH OTHER NASAL MEDICATIONS

The nasal allergy sprays all have some degree of drying effect on nasal mucosa. Therefore it is recommended that they always be used in conjunction with nasal saline. A good plan is to use saline initially, blow the nose gently and then apply the nasal steroid medication. Regular use of nasal saline can also reduce the need for decongestants.