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Ear, Nose and Throat
Head and Neck Surgery
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INSTRUCTIONS FOR NASAL WASHES

Introduction

Flushing or washing out the nose restores the normal flow of mucus and clears away crusts from inside the nose. Routing nasal washes will help to clear infections, keep infections from starting, control nasal odors, decrease nasal stuffiness or promote healing after nasal or sinus surgery. You may need special tools to do this well. It may seem like a weird thing to be doing at first, but soon it will feel as normal as brushing your teeth or combing your hair! Think of it as a shower for your nose!!

Salt Water (Saline)

1. The Salt - Pickling ("canning") salt or Kosher salt are best because they are free of iodine and other preservatives. Regular table salt is OK if you cannot get pickling salt.
2. The Water - Use sterile, bottled or purified water if possible. Tap water or well water that is drinkable is also acceptable for people who are not immune suppressed.
3. The Temperature - Use the saline at body temperature (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit or 37 degrees Celsius) or slightly warmer, but NOT HOT. Short microwave heating may be an easy way to warm it.

Home Recipe

Hypertonic Buffered Saline (for stuffy noses, sinusitis). Mix 2-3 heaping tsp. Salt, 1 tsp. baking soda and 6-7 tablespoons Karo Syrup (white/clear, not brown) with 1 qt. (1 liter) water.

[If you mix large amounts for multiple uses, store in a new or clean airtight bottle in refrigerator. Make up a new batch every seven days. (Daily after surgery)]

Commercial Solutions

1. Saline drops, spray or mist, from the local drug store (Breathe Free, Salines or Pretz are good brands. Avoid one with alcohol or thimerosal in the.
2. Pretz Irrigation - Lubricating Solution in an 8oz. Bottle with irrigating spout and large refills (from Parnell Pharmacy 1-800-457-4276).

Directions for Preparation and Use of the Hypertonic Saline Solution

Preparation

1. Clean a 1-quart glass jar carefully, then fill it with bottled water.
You need not boil the water.
2. See Home Recipes above for Hypertonic Buffered Saline.
3. Store at room temperature and shake or stir before each use.
4. Mix a new batch weekly.

Use

1. Pour some into a clean bowl. Warming it may help, but make sure that it is NOT HOT.
2. Fill the syringe or bulb irrigator. To avoid contamination, DO NOT place bulb or syringe into jar.
3. Stand over the sink or in shower and squirt the mixture into each side of the nose several times.
4. Rinse the nose two to three times daily.

Bulb Syringe Method

Buy a small rubber bulb syringe (these are packaged as 2, 3 or 4oz. Ear syringes, \$5) from your local drug store. Fill it with the solution and place it into your nose. Stand over the sink or in the shower and squirt the salt water into each side of the nose. Aim the stream toward the back of the head, *not* the top of the head. This lets you spit some of the salt water out of your mouth. It will not hurt if a little is swallowed. Squeeze the bulb to flush your nose. The saline will flow back out from the nose and mouth. If the force of the fluid seems too weak, you can use scissors to trim back the syringe tip and widen its opening. This will make the flushing more forceful when you squeeze the bulb.

If You Use a Nasal Steroid

You should always use the salt water mixture first, then use the nasal steroid spray (Flonase, Vancenase, Beconase, Nasacort). The steroid works better when it is sprayed onto nasal membranes that have been cleaned and decongested by the salt water. Then the steroid medicine will reach deeper into the nose and sinuses.

For Young Children

For children, it is best to start with a weaker salt to water mixture and gradually increase to using 2 to 3 heaping teaspoons of salt, or whatever the child will accept. You can put the salt water into a small commercial spray container, like a nasal steroid spray bottle. Squirt it *many* times into each side of the nose. *Do not force* your child to lie down. This rinse is easier to do when sitting or standing.