



## **Saline Nasal Sprays & Irrigation**

Patient Education Handout associated with UMHS Clinical Care Guideline

### **Saline nasal sprays**

#### **How do saline nasal sprays work?**

Saline nasal sprays provide moisture to the nasal passages, especially during the winter when the environment is cold and dry outside, hot and dry inside. When your nasal passages are dry, mild nasal crusting may occur, and bacterial infections can develop under these crusts. Saline sprays clean the nasal passages of crusts and mucus and also help the natural cleaning system of your nasal passages.

#### **Where can I purchase saline nasal sprays?**

Saline sprays are available over the counter at most drug stores. Some national brands include Saline, Ocean Spray and Ayr. Many pharmacies and stores carry their own brands.

Preservative-free saline sprays are also available at most pharmacies, including Meijer, Walgreen's, and Rite Aid.

#### **Are there any side effects?**

Nasal sprays may sting slightly. You may experience irritation caused by the preservative in the saline spray. If this happens, use "Simply Saline", a preservative free saline spray.

### **Nasal saline irrigation**

#### **What is nasal saline irrigation?**

Nasal irrigation is used when greater volumes of saline are needed, for example, when large mucus crusts build up or nasal/sinus polyps block mucus clearance.



To irrigate your nasal passages, a bulb syringe (used to clear the nasal passages of babies) can be used.

To make your own nasal irrigation solution, mix:

**¼ tsp. of kosher or pickling salt**

**¼ tsp. baking soda**

**8 oz. of warm tap water**

(1 tsp. of salt, 1 tsp baking soda per 32 ounces of water)

Since tap water may have some bacterial impurities, you may choose to use distilled water instead. Boil the distilled water and store in a refrigerator until you add the salt and baking soda.

Or, you can purchase the “Sinus Rinse” system (available at the University of Michigan Outpatient Pharmacy, Walgreen’s, and Meijer’s), which comes with single use salt packets. The Sinus Rinse system may be easier and more comfortable to use than a bulb syringe.



Sinus Rinse System      Premixed salt packets

### How do I do saline irrigation?

Use 8-16 ounces of solution in each nasal cavity 1-2 times daily, or as often as is prescribed by your health care provider.

- Lower your head over a sink and turn your head so that your left nostril is down.
- Pour solution from the container into your right nostril.
- Water will drain from your left nostril into the sink.
- Gently blow your nose.
- Repeat the same process for other nostril.

Breathing through your nose during irrigation will prevent a mess and minimize the amount that enters the throat. You should use only enough pressure to move the solution to the back of your nose so it comes out through your mouth or nose. This should not cause major discomfort once you are used to it.

Prepare fresh solution each day and clean the Sinus Rinse bottle after each use.

**May 2006**

Written by Melissa Pynnonen, M.D.

Information maintained by the UMHS Clinical Care Guidelines Committee

University of Michigan Health System  
734-936-4000

(c) copyright 2006 Regents of the University of Michigan  
[Complete disclaimer](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)