



Sinus Irrigation

Step-by-step instructions

This handout explains sinus irrigation. It includes step-by-step instructions and a recipe for making your own saline solution.

Sinus irrigation can provide relief for people who have long-lasting sinus problems. The rinse is easy to use, but it may take some time to get used to. You can either use a store-bought solution, or make your own using the recipe on page 2. All solutions are made with saline (saltwater), which helps loosen mucus and flush it out of your sinuses.

What You Will Need

- Sinus rinse packet or homemade salt/soda powder solution (see recipe on page 2)
- Distilled water, filtered water, or boiled water (water must be boiled for 15 minutes, then cooled, before using it)
- Irrigating device: a clean, large medical syringe (30 mL), sinus rinse squeeze bottle, or Neti pot
- A clean container, if you are using the recipe on page 2

Preparing the Solution

Mix the solution according to the instructions on the package or the recipe on page 2. Make sure the water is warm (not hot) – no warmer than body temperature (98.6°F or 37°C).

If you are using a solution that was made earlier, place only the amount of solution you will use in a separate bowl or in your irrigating device. Do **not** place used irrigating devices in the container with the solution that will be used later (to prevent contamination).

How to Irrigate Your Sinuses

- Stand in the shower or lean over the sink.
- Tilt your head forward and turn it to one side.
- Place the irrigating device in your top nostril and pour or squirt the solution gently into your nostril. Aim for the **BACK** of your head, not the top of your head. Gravity or gentle pressure should be enough to help the solution move through your sinuses and out your lower nostril.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Adult Cystic Fibrosis Clinic: 206-598-8446

To make an appointment at the Cystic Fibrosis Clinic: 206-598-4615

Clinic hours are weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Pulmonary fellow on call to be paged.

- **Never** force the solution through your nostrils. If gentle pressure does not push the solution through your sinuses, **STOP**.
- You may notice a salty taste in your throat, and some solution may drain into your throat. This is normal. You can try gently breathing out through your nose to help the solution drain through your lower nostril and not your throat.
- Repeat the process with your head tilted forward and turned to the other side, pouring or squirting the solution into your other nostril.
- You may do this up to 2 times a day, or as directed by your health care team.

Solution Recipe

Ingredients

To make 2 cups of solution, use:

- ½ to 1½ heaping teaspoons pickling (canning) or kosher salt – this type of salt does not contain iodine, anti-caking agents, or preservatives that could irritate your nasal passages
- ½ heaping teaspoon baking soda
- 2 cups water that has been distilled, filtered, or boiled for 15 minutes (then cooled)

Directions

Warm the water and add the salt and baking soda. Stir thoroughly until salt and baking soda are well dissolved.

Using the Solution

Let the solution cool if it is too hot, or warm it until it reaches body temperature. Use ½ cup of solution for each nostril. You can store the unused solution at room temperature for up to 1 week.

If you have burning or stinging while using the solution, you can make it weaker by using less salt. The burning may also go away after the first few times you use the solution.

Washing Your Device

We strongly recommend cleaning your device often. Also, check to make sure it is clean before each use. Do **not** place any of the items in the dishwasher. Wash them with warm soapy water and let them air dry. Or, follow the cleaning instructions that came with your device.

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