



Ear, Nose & Throat Consultants of North Mississippi

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Cleaning your Nose and Sinuses

Why is it important to clean my nose and sinuses?

Just like you would clean your finger if you cut it, cleaning helps your healing after surgery. It also can help prevent sinus problems on an ongoing basis. But reaching into your sinus cavities is more difficult than washing your cut finger under the faucet.

So how do I do it?

The best way to cleanse or flush your nose and sinuses is by gently squirting a special solution into your nose. It will feel odd the first time you do it, but after that, people get used to it quickly. Be sure to read all the directions here before you begin. You will need to buy a small Politzer bulb that is used to help drain the sinuses of children. You can find these bulbs in the children's section of Wal-mart and drugstores.

Ok, now what?

It's critical that you DO NOT USE WATER STRAIGHT FROM THE TAP. You must boil the water first to remove any contaminants. To the boiled water you will add salt. If you are recovering from surgery, the doctor may also instruct you to add some Bactroban antibiotic ointment.

How do I make the Solution?

To make the saltwater: Put one quart of water into a pan. Add one to two teaspoons of salt. Bring to a rolling boil for at least one minute. Allow to cool. Pour the salt water (also called saline solution) into a covered jar of some kind and label it. It will keep for eight days.

To make the Bactroban solution: Put one quart of water into a pan. Add one to two teaspoons of salt. Then also add two 22 gram tubes of Bactroban ointment or one 44 gram tube. Bring to a rolling boil for at least one minute. Allow to cool. Pour the solution into a covered jar and label it. Refrigerate. It will keep for eight days.

Now how do I get the solution into my nose?

1. Pour about four ounces of the solution you are using into a pan or microwave-safe container and heat till just lukewarm (about 15 seconds in a microwave). Check with your finger to make sure it's not too hot.
2. Take your bulb and squeeze as much air as possible from it. Keep squeezing it and insert the pointed end into the lukewarm water. Let go of the bulb and it will suck in the water.
3. Lean over a sink. Insert the pointed end into one nostril and squeeze the bulb end, forcing the water into your nose. It will then drain out of your nose. Likely, a little water will remain in the bulb.
4. Repeat the process with the other nostril. If you have solution left in your cup, repeat until you've used it all. When you finish, be sure to squirt out any remaining water in the bulb.

How often should I do this?

Flush with both solutions 3-4 times per day for two weeks after surgery. To prevent sinus problems flush with the saltwater 1-2 times daily.

What if I'm not at home?

If you're away from home, an alternative is to buy prepackaged saline solution in a spray bottle. Some commercial brands are Ayr and Ocean Spray.