

Nasal Lavage

Joelle came into my office with her chronic allergies in an uproar. Her sinuses were so congested she could not breathe through her nose and her middle ears were fluid filled. While using Reflexology and essential oils to assist, I told her about nasal lavage. Many of my clients have reported incredible relief from their allergies, congestion and chronic sinusitis and infections by cleaning out their sinuses daily.

Flushing the nasal cavity with saline solution quickly removes the softened mucus and moisturizes the older encrusted material so the cilia can move it out naturally. Both adults and children can do this and there are no documented serious adverse effects. People who use nasal irrigation rely less on medications and make fewer visits to physicians

Also known as nasal irrigation, sinus rinsing, or Jala Neti (Sanskrit term meaning "water cleansing"), this is a simple way to remove viruses, bacteria, mold, allergens, dust, mucus, and general crud that land inside the nose and sinus passages and contribute to allergic reactions, colds, chronic nasal congestion, post nasal drip, frequent sinus infections, asthma, and other respiratory ills.

In addition, proponents of sinus lavage claim it decreases other upper respiratory complaints like sore throats and coughs, postnasal drip and inflammation of tonsils and adenoids. It is beneficial for illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis as it reduces the tendency for mouth breathing by freeing the nostrils of mucus. It is beneficial for headaches, depression and general mental tension. It helps the eyes because it also flushes the tear ducts. It can help certain types of ear disorders such as middle ear infections and tinnitus. By improving sensitivity of the olfactory nerves, it helps to restore diminished senses of smell and taste. Wow! A little salt water can be a powerful thing!

I found many statements from Doctors all over the US saying how the practice of nasal lavage has helped their patients. There seem to be lots of study results published in medical journals also, so this is not just a weird "new age" quirk.

To accomplish this, you squirt a solution of slightly salty water up your nose, let it drip out, blow your nose gently, then repeat. OK, it may sound a little yucky but keep reading. My clients who got past the initial revulsion and fear of choking and worked up the courage to try it, found it to be both comfortable and soothing. It really is simple, gentle, and effective.

To make an isotonic solution (the same saltiness as body fluids), mix one-quarter teaspoon of salt and one-quarter teaspoon of baking soda to 8 ounces of water.

I recommend using distilled water to avoid introducing any additional irritants or infections. Distilled water is inexpensive and found at any grocery store. The baking soda alkalizes the water, making it closer to the body's natural pH, to keep it from stinging. I also recommend using a pure, non-iodized salt. Natural sea salt is excellent and has the advantage of many trace elements that are helpful to our health but canning and pickling salt is pure (99.95% NaCl), cheap and also available at most grocery stores. Use a little more, up to one-half teaspoon per cup of water, if the salt is a coarser grind.

The squeeze bottles of saline nasal spray available at most drugstores don't spray high enough to flush out the sinuses; they just moisten the inside of the nostrils. It is important to get the solution up into the sinus passages.

A simple way to get the solution up your nose is to cup it in your hand and sniff. Blue bulb syringes for cleaning out babies' ears and noses work but still might not be powerful enough to get the solution up high enough for an adult. There are larger squeeze bottles and/or syringes available. I found some advertised specifically for nasal rinsing.

Watch a video showing a simple easy method of nasal irrigation:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/nasal-lavage/MM00552>

There is a variety of nasal hygiene products becoming increasingly available on the Internet and in stores. There are simple squeeze bottles with or without the pre-mixed solution and expensive high tech solutions that are similar to water-piks.

The traditional yoga method uses a Neti pot (a small pot with a spout, resembling a mini teapot) and a gentler and more mindful method. The solution is prepared the same and placed into the Neti pot. Bending over the sink, turn the head to the side and pour the solution into the top nostril. Continue breathing through the mouth while the solution runs into the upper nostril, through the sinuses and out the lower nostril. Repeat on the other side. Face down into the sink and blow gently, holding one nostril closed at a time then blowing through both, until the sinuses are drained and the nostrils dry.

Watch a video of Neti pot irrigation here: http://www.netipot.org/demo_video.htm

A free e-book about the Jala Neti procedure is available at <http://www.yoga-age.com/asanas/jala.pdf>

Here are some pointers to make this more comfortable:

- Adjust the force to your comfort. If you squirt the solution up your nose with too much force, it hurts. Squirt too gently and you are not accomplishing a thing.
- Carefully mix the solution. If it is too salty, or not salty enough, it stings. Also, make sure to stir the solution until all the salt crystals dissolve.
- Make the solution as close to body temperature as possible. If it is too cool, it will cause the nasal membranes to swell, defeating the purpose of the wash. If it is too hot, it will burn the sensitive nasal mucosa.

If you suffer from any of the complaints listed above, you should definitely try this. Nasal lavage really is simple and inexpensive. It is so much healthier and less invasive than drugs and/or surgery. I know it sounds yucky but the results can be so amazing. Just imagine how wonderful it will be to have clear sinuses and better health, take a deep breath and “suck it up”!

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