

# NASAL IRRIGATION

## What is nasal irrigation?

This is the process of washing the inside of the nose and sinuses with salty water.

## Why?

One job of the nose is to filter the air we breathe in, and make it warm and moist to breathe in. We breathe in 14,000 litres of air every day, but this will also have pollution, allergens, and irritants in which can make breathing through the nose more difficult.

## Irritants

Nasal irrigation helps remove these allergens and chemicals which can cause inflammation of the nose – rhinitis – which leads to excessive mucus (snot) formation, reduced sense of smell, pain, and infection. This helps improve people's symptoms and helps medication get to where it's needed without getting trapped in snot.

Ear, Nose, and Throat Department  
Rotherham Hospital  
Moorgate Road  
Rotherham  
S60 2UD

# Nasal Irrigation

Ear, Nose, and Throat Department



[www.rotherhamhospital.nhs.uk](http://www.rotherhamhospital.nhs.uk)

**NHS**

The Rotherham  
NHS Foundation Trust

# HOW TO

Boil half a litre of water & pour into a jug.

## ALLOW IT TO COOL TO BODY TEMPERATURE

Add half a teaspoon each of:

Salt  
Sodium bicarbonate (bicarbonate of soda)  
Sugar

Stir until fully dissolved

Stand over a sink or wash bowl and pour some water into the palm of your cupped hand. Gently sniff in the solution in one side of the nose, then the other.

If you have bought, been recommended, or already use a NeilMed Sinus Rinse bottle, place the mixture into this and use this if the sample sachets run out.

Repeat as often as needed.

Some mixture may go down the back of the nose. Do not worry about this but try not to swallow the mixture.  
Prepare a clean solution each time.

# SURGERY

After sinus surgery or nasal surgery, the operated areas will take some weeks to heal. Just like a scab forms on a grazed knee, crust will form on the inside of the nose to help everything underneath heal.

**This can make your nose feel more blocked than it was immediately after surgery, but it is entirely normal.**

Some people will struggle to breathe through their nose as a result and may get some blood stained snot which make the nose difficult or painful to blow. Nasal irrigation is a way to wash away the snot, clot, and excess crust to reduce the risk of infection and make it easier to breathe after surgery.

After you have irrigated the nose, you can put any prescribed medication eg Steroid drops and sprays into the nose as prescribed.

If you use NeilMed Sinus Rinse, you may also be asked to put your steroid nasal drops into your salt water mixture to help get the medication into the sinuses where it's needed if you may need or have had sinus surgery for nasal polyps.

# F.A.Q.s

## **My ears hurt when irrigating – Is this OK?**

Sometimes, water may end up behind your eardrum after irrigation. Your hearing may be muffled but will improve with yawning or swallowing. If you have a cold or feel unwell, wait until your symptoms improve or irrigation will hurt more than usual.

## **How can I improve drainage after irrigation?**

Gently tilt your head from side to side or bend forward to encourage sinus emptying.

## **What if I am struggling to irrigate?**

Devices such as NeilMed Sinus Rinse are useful if you have eg arthritis. They are available at most pharmacies and you may be able to buy one at your next appointment.

## **What if it stings/burns to irrigate?**

This can happen if the mixture is too hot or cold, or sometimes if there is too much salt/bicarbonate.