



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



Nasal douching

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What is nasal douching?

Nasal douching is the process of washing out the nose with salty water.

Reasons for douching

The nose acts as a filter and humidifier for the 14,000 litres of air we breathe each day.

Inflammation of the nasal membranes caused by sinus disease, allergies or irritants (such as cigarette smoke, perfumes or noxious chemicals) leads to excessive mucus production.

Washing this excess mucus away along with any irritants or allergens helps to reduce the amount of inflammation in the nasal passages and relieve symptoms.

Nasal breathing

Clear nasal passages are vital in order to allow us to effectively breathe through our nose. Breathing through the nose allows the air to be filtered, warmed and humidified. Filtration helps to avoid harmful pathogens reaching our lungs and therefore reduces the risk of chest infections. Humidification and warming of the air makes the air more comfortable to breathe in and avoids dry harsh air reaching the lungs which can exacerbate respiratory conditions. Nasal breathing is also crucial to achieving an effective breathing pattern, whilst mouth breathing will encourage

dysfunctional breathing. Other benefits of nasal breathing include Nitric Oxide production and CO2 regulation.

Nasal Rinsing Devices

There are multiple nasal rinsing devices available:

- Netti Pot (Make up the solution as directed below)
- Neil Med Sinus Rinse (Sterilise the water as directed below and add a pre-mixed sachet)
- Sterimar Breathe Easy (Pre-made spray)

Recipe for douching

Prepare:

- 1 pint of water- boiled on the hob for 5 minutes to allow sufficient sterilisation, then cooled to body temperature

Add (until dissolved):

- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of sugar (optional)
- 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda (optional)

Directions for douching

1. Prepare the solution as necessary
2. Standing over a bowl or sink lean forwards slightly and tilt your head to one side
3. Place the device into the uppermost nostril and spray, tip or squeeze the bottle (If using Sterimar press the nozzle briefly, if using Neil Med or a Netti Pot tip/squeeze until $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the solution has been used)

4. The solution should drain out of the opposite nostril, however this may not occur initially if you have increased nasal congestion
5. Bring your head to midline and gently blow your nose without pinching completely
6. If tolerable gently sniff in any remaining solution once or twice to clear out the posterior nasopharyngeal area
7. Spit out any solution in your mouth
8. If using Sterimar, repeat steps 2-7 twice more
9. Repeat this process on your other nasal passage, ensuring you tilt your head to the alternate side

Common questions and further advice

Can I just use plain tap water?

It is advised you douche only using solution made from the recipe provided or approved ready made sachets. Douching with water alone can result in painful stinging sensations.

When should I douche?

When it is most convenient for you. However, if this is before you go to bed, it is recommended you douche at least an hour beforehand to allow time for full nasal drainage to occur.

How often should I douche?

Ideally at least twice a day – but you may

douche as many times as required to obtain comfortable relief.

I am getting discomfort in my ears – should I continue douching?

You are advised to refrain from douching if suffering from acute ear pain or infection as doing so may cause greater discomfort. Wait until symptoms subside or consult your doctor for further advice.

How can I improve nasal drainage after douching?

If you find residual solution is not draining effectively after douching, try tilting your head from side to side whilst bending forwards to encourage sinus emptying.

What if I am finding douching difficult or having problems with the technique?

Please see the QR codes on the back page which can provide further guidance with the nasal rinsing technique. If you are still finding this difficult it can be helpful to prepare your nasal rinsing solution and bring this to your next physiotherapy appointment so that they can offer guidance on your technique.

What if I have also been prescribed nasal drops or sprays?

Continue to use them as normal but always apply them after douching.

Your physiotherapist today was:



<https://www.neilmed.com/unk/directions-for-use-warnings/>



<https://www.sterimar.com/en/our-products/breathe-easy-daily/#toggle-id-3>

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