



## **Nasal Irrigation for Healthy Sinuses**

### **What causes sinus problems?**

As we breathe, our nose acts as a filter for dirt, dust and pollen. In cold dry winter weather, the nose also humidifies and warms incoming air. (In Colorado winters, noses work overtime).

Our sinuses are factories and reservoirs for the mucus that assists in washing away the dirt, dust, and pollen that collects in the nose. If the tubes between our nose and our sinuses get blocked, the sinuses can't drain and this leads to sinus pressure and discomfort.

In the same way you periodically clean the filter in your furnace or car, it makes good sense to clean the nasal filtering system in your body. Under normal circumstances the sinuses make about one liter of mucus daily. By keeping your nasal filter clean, you decrease the stimulus for further mucus production from the sinuses.

### **Is there anything patients can do at home to keep sinuses healthy?**

Yes. It's called "nasal irrigation." Numerous studies using nasal irrigation in patients with respiratory infections have proved its effectiveness. The procedure should be performed every morning and later in the day if you encounter lots of particles in the air. It is also a great way to feel better and drain the excess mucus produced during a respiratory infection.

### **What equipment is required?**

A box of table salt, tap water and a plastic or paper cup. You really don't need special solutions or other equipment.

### **How do you do it?**

The easiest way is in the shower or over the sink.

Mix 1/4-1/2 teaspoon salt in a cup of lukewarm water and pour some of the solution into the palm of your hand. With your head held down, gently sniff the solution into your nose and let it drain out. Afterwards, gently blow your nose. Take it easy -- you don't have to force anything.

### **How does it work?**

The salt water drains your sinuses by drawing mucus out via osmosis. If the solution stings at all, add more salt. This makes the solution more hypertonic to draw out more mucus.

### **Is nasal irrigation uncomfortable?**

Try it and discover how easy it is and how much better you feel afterward. What's really uncomfortable is leaving the gunk inside you!