

"People with chronic sinus conditions should use a nasal douche daily, as it promotes drainage of the sinuses and speeds healing of inflamed tissues....a ceramic device for this purpose is called a Neti Pot"

-Self Healing Andrew Weil, M.D.

Sinus Self Care

Sinus drainage is a natural part of the sinus's cleansing process. Our sinuses and nose are like an air filtering system for our lungs, warming and humidifying the air, as well as catching dust, pollen and germs before they enter the lungs. In fact healthy sinuses produce between one and two quarts of mucus a day. Most of us don't even pay attention to the two quarts that usually drain down the back of our throats. So when does it become a problem? When sinuses are overly dry they do not provide the proper humidity for the lungs and sinuses. As mucus becomes dryer and thicker it drains more slowly. Like a petri dish, sinuses with stagnant mucus are more susceptible to growing germs. During seasons of high airborne irritants, February-September, irritants can cling to the inside of the sinuses and if rinsed out are less likely to cause allergic reaction.

To keep mucus free flowing, proper **inner hydration** by drinking water is particularly important, especially after:

- 1) any activity that increases breathing; 2) being exposed to wind; 3) after sweating;
- 4) being in dry or dusty environments. Most people agree that barely colored urine is sign of good hydration. However I also say that if you drink a large glass of water you should have to urinate within 1-2 hours. If you are not urinating much you may be dehydrated. Other signs of dehydration are: 1) mottled/cracked lips, 2) lightheadedness, or 3) the skin of the back of your forearm doesn't go down instantly after you pull it up. Remember if you are taking medication that tends to make your mouth dry you will need to be extra vigilant. Beverages such as colas, alcohol, green and black tea or coffee do not count as hydrating drinks. They actually dry you out more because they act as a diuretic.

External hydration can be improved many ways: environmentally by using a good humidifier in your home; directly by showering, steaming with simple hot water and by using nasal irrigation.

Humidifiers: Many forced air furnace heated homes have an attached humidifier, however that may not be enough if you are experiencing many colds, sinus problems or lung infections. Fall and winter headaches can also be related to dry sinuses. Many tabletop humidifiers require anti-bacterial/fungal additives. I don't like the idea of inhaling airborne chemicals. I prefer the **Venta, a cold evaporative humidifier/air washer**. It requires no filters, nor bactericides. It filters the air and only needs to be cleaned with vinegar and water once every 10-14 days. A precipitant is added at time of cleaning that helps keep filtered dust in the bottom of the unit. **Venta** products used to be available at stores like Bed Bath and Beyond, but now must be ordered online. <http://www.ventahumidifiers.com/>

Alternate Nostril Breathing: This procedure assists in the drainage of mucus from the sinuses. Often one nasal passage is less open than the other so this tends to balance out the airflow. Be prepared with Kleenex. This is particularly helpful to singers who want to maximize their sinus airflow and sound. [Click Here to view video:](#) Use right hand for entire procedure.



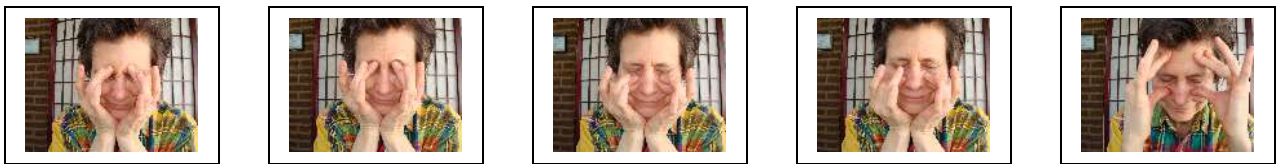
Place your right thumb on your right nostril closing it (index and middle finger support on forehead). Breathe into your left nostril, hold 3 seconds, cover left nostril with ring finger, exhale out right nostril. Breathe in to the right nostril, hold 3 seconds, close right nostril and exhale out left nostril. Repeat 3-5x. Massage indent areas to the sides of each nostril with index fingers in between each round.

Finger Pressure Sinus Decompression: Sit at a table with your elbows on the table, back straight but leaning forward, your chin on the heels of your hands and middle fingertips placed on each side of your inner eyebrow.

Push on your middle fingers for 5 seconds in such a way as to take pressure off your chin slightly. Then release the pressure on your brow and let your chin rest fully on your hands. Repeat this procedure but each time move your middle fingers about a finger tip distance outwards along:

- A) The top of your eyebrows. You will feel the tender points.
- B) The lower rim of your eyebrows.
- C) Lower rim of the eye orbit below the eyes.
- D) Edges of your nose from the bridge to nostrils.
- E) Switch to fingers supporting your forehead and thumbs under your cheek bones, use upward pressure on your thumbs along the undersides of your cheekbones from nose to jaw. Repeat sequence 3x.

[Click Here to view video:](#)



Simple Steaming: One simple home steaming method that can be very helpful at the early onset of a sinus related cold or face pain is to fill a large glass or ceramic bowl halfway with boiling water, then float 1-2 tablespoons of German chamomile flowers on the top. Cover your head with a towel and breathe the steam till cool. You may need to come up for air and wipe the sweat off your face once. ***German chamomile (chamomilla recutita) is anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory and is an analgesic in part because of a component called azure-blue.*** I also like to use *Migrastick* on my face and neck prior to steaming if I have tightness and facial pain. It contains ***lavender and mint oil, which relax muscles.*** It can be found at the health food store and comes in a 2" green roll-on vial. Don't use near or above the eyes when steaming.

Nasal Irrigation (Neti Pot): This is crucial to anyone who gets sinus infections requiring antibiotics every time they get a cold. Many people have narrow sinuses, which make proper drainage difficult. ***Turning often in one's sleep helps the sinuses drain, so people who do not move much at night might be more prone to infection.*** It is also helpful for anyone who has airborne allergies or morning stuffiness. It is a **must** for singers.

Chronic low-grade allergic sinuses often can be managed without allergy medicine.

A good friend of mine no longer gets sinus infections after being directed by her nutritionist to:

- 1) reduce dietary intake of wheat, sugar, dairy and peanuts (because of the mold on shells). Over consumption of these types of foods can make you allergic to them.
- 2) take the following supplements: Vitamin C with quercetin, *Nasanol* and perilla seed extract tablets (*Metagenics* brand herbal supplements must be purchased from a Metagenics distributor).
- 3) irrigate sinuses 1-2 times a day.

Nasal irrigation twice a day rinses out the allergens we breathe in. Nasal irrigation is particularly helpful after being exposed to dust, chemicals, dander, and pollen or after being out in the garden, forest, or traffic.

Neti Pot, How To Do It: There are many nasal irrigation devices on the market including ultrasonic and pulsating water devices, however the simplest is a **neti pot**. A neti pot is a ceramic or plastic pot with a handle and spout designed to tip easily into one nostril at a time. A solution of water, salt and sometimes baking soda helps irrigate, moisturize and remove irritants and germs. Simply put the spout of the pot gently into your nostril and tip your head and pot so that the solution comes out the other nostril. It takes some finesse and playing with the angle to get it just right. I like to blow my nose to clear mucus in between rinses. Tip a little, blow a little 4-5 times for each nostril. I find one pot sufficient for both nostrils. If you're very stuffy tipping your head and pot back a little is helpful. In the morning I like to use the neti pot in the shower so the plastic pot is the safest.

The Salt Solution: The usual recommendations are to use 1/4 teaspoon of non-iodized fine table salt per 8 oz of lukewarm water. This is normal saline and is not likely to sting. **Plain water will sting.** Some people like to add ¼ teaspoon baking soda to the mix. *NeilMed* makes a plastic pot, which I find lightweight and easy for travel. **You can mix your own or use NeilMed's pre-measured packets of salt and baking soda.** I prefer the pre-measured packets as the mixture is always just right.
<http://www.neilmed.com/usa/nasaflo.php>

Tips:

- 1) Rinse out pot before each use, clean thoroughly about once a week, many can go in the dishwasher. Always clean after recovering from a cold. Don't share your pot.
- 2) Examine the inside of the nozzle from time to time as it might need cleaning with a q-tip (if you get mold in your shower you might get it in the nozzle too).
- 3) If you have dry sinuses consider warm water.
- 4) If your sinuses are inflamed and/or swollen you might try cool water (not cold), it is soothing.
- 5) You may have to play with tipping your head further back if you sense the mucus is higher up.
- 6) Sometimes water won't flow out the other side, work your angles, if still blocked irrigate more often and blow.
- 7) If I know I have a lot of dust in my nose I will do a straight flush from one nostril to the other first. Once that is rinsed I will tilt the water up a little higher into my sinuses before I let it out the other side. Don't worry if water trickles down your throat.
- 8) For very runny noses you might increase your salt by a 1/8 teaspoon, it will be drying. This is called hypertonic. Return to the normal mixture once your nose is no longer runny.
- 9) Sinus headaches can require a decongestant.

Precautions:

- 1) Be precise with your mixture and temperature. Too much salt can burn, sting and dry out your nose. *Simply Saline* has an aerosol bottle and it says *hypertonic*, only use if you have a very runny nose. Otherwise it can be too drying and you will get a sore in your nose.
- 2) Many people have staph bacteria colonized in their nasal passages without actually having an infection. This is why hospitals test pre-operatively by swabbing the nose for a resistant strain of staph (MRSA). If positive they give antibiotics to avoid infecting the surgical site. If you have tested positive for MRSA you should take extra precautions to avoid spreading it when you blow your nose. Definitely have your own non-shared towels.
- 3) Some doctors have voiced concern that using a neti pot may send infections into the sinuses. Always consult with your doctor if this is a concern for you but the many users I've spoken to have not reported this as a problem. The benefits far outweigh the risk as I see it.

For more reading on the subject, go to:

http://www.healthandyoga.com/html/yogalibrary/neti_faqs/neti_faq.pdf?netiFAQs=pdf