

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

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Neti Pot Mishelle Knuteson, M.H.



Sinus congestion seems to affect many this time of year. Our sinuses have to deal with the dryness of the winter season as well as being closed up in our homes and businesses with the furnace going, stirring up dust and adding to the dryness and pollutants in the air. Sinuses are hollow spaces within the bones of the face. There are three pairs of sinuses: frontal, ethmoid, maxillary and one single sinus at the base of the skull called sphenoid. Each of these connect to the nose through a small opening called ostia. The ostia acts to humidify and warm the air we breathe, add to our sense of smell and taste, and plays a significant role in the quality of sound we hear. That is why when our nasal passages are clogged we don't taste or hear things as well.

Sinuses are lined with a mucous membrane called mucosa. Mucosa acts as a filter to trap inhaled germs, dust pollens and environmental pollutants before they reach the respiratory system. When the sinuses are inflamed or irritated the ostia becomes blocked. If the mucous membranes dry out, the body produces reactive mucus. In either case the nasal environment is disturbed and the mucous accumulation becomes a breeding ground for viruses and bacteria. A way to help protect and clear the sinus passages is by using a nasal saline irrigation therapy. The most popular means is with a neti pot-- a ceramic or plastic pot that looks like a cross between a small teapot and Aladdin's magic lamp.

The use of the neti pot is a very effective method to clear away crusting in the nasal passages and for relieving symptoms from allergies and environmental irritants that cause congestion and facial pain and pressure. A neti pot works by thinning the mucus and flushing it out of the nasal passages. Use of a saline solution helps the cilia (the tiny hair like structures that line the nasal cavities) draw out the excess mucus and irritants.

To use the neti pot mix 16 ounces of warm distilled water with 1 teaspoon of the finest grind natural salt (sea salt, himalayan, real salt, etc). Some people like to add ½ teaspoon of baking soda to buffer the solution and make it gentler on the nose. I don't use the baking soda but I do like to add a drop or two of clove or eucalyptus oil to my solution as well as about ¼

teaspoon of either sesame or olive oil. This can be stored up to 5 days in a covered container. The solution should be close to body temperature when you are using it.

Once the the neti pot is filled, tilt your head over the sink at about a 45-degree angle. Place the spout into your top nostril and gently pour the saline solution into that nostril. The fluid will flow through your nasal cavity and out the other nostril. Blow your nose to get rid of any remaining liquid, then refill the neti pot and repeat the process on the other side. Use about 2 to 4 ounces in each nostril. You shouldn't have any of the solution run down your throat. However, if you do just spit it out.

You can use the neti pot daily, 3-4 times a day if needed in chronic conditions and after that three times a week is enough to keep your nasal passages clear and cleaned out. Under normal circumstances, you should not feel any burning or stinging. If there is any discomfort you can use less salt in your solution or change the temperature of your water. Keep the neti pot clean by rinsing with warm water and air drying between uses, or wash in the dishwasher.

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