

Only the Nose Knows

By KATE GURNETT
Albany Times Union

ALBANY, N.Y. – Three winter wishes: Clear nostrils. Easy breathing. No medicine. For many, relief lies in the neti pot, the Aladdin's lamp of cold prevention. Fill it with salt water and pour it into the nostrils to flush the sinuses. Yes, in the nose. And through. Think grade school cafeteria. Like a good, milk-spewing joke. Leave decorum at the door. "It's an odd type of thing, but it's easy to do," said Kathleen Eberlein, who pours salt water through her nose to combat chronic sinus problems. With as many as 40 million Americans fighting sinusitis and tiring of antibiotics, antihistamines and decongestants, she sees water irrigation as a natural alternative. She is not alone. The Los Angeles Lakers, triathletes and holistic health gurus such as Dr. Andrew Weil recommend a host of techniques from neti pots to \$90 electronic nasal systems to ease symptoms from congestion and post-nasal drip to allergies. A recent University of Wisconsin study found the neti pot provided a simple drug-free treatment for

sinus infections. Patients reported fewer headaches, fewer side effects and decreased use of antibiotics. Nasal cleansing, known as neti, has been used by practitioners of yoga and ayurveda in India for hundreds of years. First-time users may find the water doesn't drain (adjust your head tilt) or the water stings (add baking soda to the salt water). Blame it on the weather—or on increased knowledge of the pots—but this year, neti pot use is on the rise. "I must have sold 100 and need to order more," said Patricia Kuehlfus, the owner of Pathways Body, Mind, Spirit Shop in suburban Colonie. She also sells Sinucleanse, a natural saline solution, to accompany the pots. "If you're starting to get a cold, it stops it. If you have a cold, it helps healing," she said. Flushing removes excess pollens and pollution and soothes dry nasal linings.

Nasal Rinsing May Cut Colds

Nasal irrigation treatment was "effective" in reducing overall incidence of colds among practitioners, according to Dr. Richard Ravizza of Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pennsylvania. Dr. Ravizza presented the findings recently at the 50th Scientific Assembly of the American Academy of Family Physicians, held in San Francisco.

Ravizza told conference attendees that nasal irrigation has been a part of yoga health-oriented "cleaning rituals" for centuries. In their study, Dr. Ravizza and Penn State colleague Dr. John Fornadley divided 294 college students into one of three subgroups. One subgroup performed daily nasal irrigation, one took a daily placebo pill and the third group was left untreated. All participants were asked to keep a "cold symptoms diary."

The authors found that students who used the daily saline rinse experienced a significant reduction in the number of colds contracted compared with non-users. On average, those engaging in nasal irrigation had fewer colds over the study period, the authors say, compared with the placebo or untreated groups.

Dr. Ravizza said that no one is quite sure how nasal irrigation might work to protect the nose against viral infection. "At a physical level, just cleaning it out, irrigating it, is probably helpful," he said. "At a molecular level, at a cellular level, I have no idea."

Of course, forcing water up one's nose is not for everyone. But Dr. Ravizza noted that, after an initial week-long adjustment period, "50% of the subjects who formed the nasal irrigation group characterized (the procedure) as pleasant. Many said it was soothing, others said it was comforting." Of the remainder, 21% said they had "neutral" feelings regarding the procedure.

Dr. Ravizza said that most people who perform nasal irrigation require proper training. "The key thing is to have good instruction," he said. He suggested that those interested in trying

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Its All About Me—

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out the technique contact a local yoga center.

Nasal Irrigation for the Alleviation of Sinonasal Symptoms

American Academy of Otolaryngology
Head and Neck Surgery
22nd Sep 2000

A recent study demonstrates that patients with chronic sinusitis may benefit from use of nasal irrigation using a saline solution. Nasal irrigation is inexpensive and yet easy to use; however, few studies exist which examine the efficacy of the procedure.

The authors of the study, "Nasal Irrigation for the Alleviation of Sinonasal Symptoms," are Diane G. Heatley MD, Glen E. Levenson PhD, Kari E. McConnell RN, and Tony L. Kille, all from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine, Madison, Wis. Their findings were presented September 25, 2000, at the American Academy of Otolaryngology--Head and Neck Surgery Foundation Annual Meeting/Oto Expo, held September 24-27, 2000, at the Washington, D.C. Convention Center.

Methodology

One hundred and fifty subjects were recruited from the Madison area via newspaper advertisements. The inclusion requirements were that patients had to be older than 18 years and at least two symptoms of chronic sinusitis (nasal congestion, anterior rhinorrhea, post-nasal drainage, headache, facial pain, halitosis, cough). Participants were excluded from the study if they had, within a six-month period, undergone sinonasal surgery or used nasal irrigation had profuse nosebleeding more than once a month, or were latex allergic.

Those eventually enrolled in the study were not under medical care for their symptoms, and although most had tried conventional therapy in the past, many no longer used these medications. No medications were prescribed to the study participants, and they were instructed to use, during the study period, any medications that they would normally use for their sinonasal symptoms.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups: (1) nasal irrigation with bulb syringe, (2) nasal irri-

gation with a nasal irrigation pot and (3) reflexology massage (irrigation control). Prior to the study, each participant underwent anterior rhinoscopy to characterize their internal anatomy, character of secretions, and to rule out a nasal mass.

Groups one and two performed daily hypertonic saline irrigation for two weeks with one method (bulb syringe or nasal irrigation pot) and then switched to the other method for the following two weeks. Irrigation devices were collected and cultured after two weeks of use. Group three (the control) performed reflexology massage daily for two weeks. Data was collected prospectively including pre-treatment Medical Outcomes Study Short Form, pre and post-treatment Rhinosinusitis Outcomes Measure, daily medication use, subjective treatment efficacy and preference of irrigation method.

Results

Completing the study were 127 subjects (49 males and 78 females), ages 19 to 86 (mean of 49 years). The three groups were similar regarding gender, smoking habit, allergic rhinitis, previous sinonasal surgery and pre-treatment Rhinosinusitis Outcomes Measure profiles. Improvement was not influenced by the presence of allergic rhinitis, previous nasal surgery and age.

Overall, 36 percent of subjects reported decreased use of sinus medication (decongestants, antihistamines, pain relievers, and nasal sprays) during the study with no measurable difference between the three groups.

There was equal preference for the bulb syringe (46 percent) and nasal irrigation pot (43 percent). The bulb syringe was found more effective by 36 percent of sub-

jects, nasal irrigation pot by 45 percent.

Smokers were less likely to show improvement. Men (84 percent) expressed improvement in their condition compared to 68 percent of women.

Conclusions

The study demonstrated that daily nasal irrigation with hypertonic saline offers patients an inexpensive treatment protocol that improves chronic sinusitis symptoms. During the study, a number of patients decreased or eliminated medication. The choice of preferred irrigation protocol was likely linked to the randomization among patient subjects. It is unclear whether the improvement found in patients in the reflexology massage group reflects a therapeutic, placebo or combination of effects. All the findings highlight the complex interactions of managing chronic sinusitis symptoms.

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163 Yard Par 3 eighth hole at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minnesota.



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