

# Nasal Suction - If Child Can't Blow Nose

## Definition

- Nasal congestion can be the worst part of a cold for young children.
- It can keep your child from feeding and sleeping well.
- Nasal suction with a little saline can save the day.
- Once a child can blow the nose, he no longer needs suction. But he will still need nasal saline to loosen up mucus before blowing. If your child can blow the nose, see the handout on Nasal Rinses.

## Health Information

### Causes

- Nose secretions are a normal part of the common cold. Most come from the sinuses.
- The discharge stays clear for a few days. Then it becomes cloudy. Sometimes, it becomes yellow or green for a few days. This is all normal.
- Thicker discharge is more common after sleep or in low humidity. Allergy medicines also make the discharge thicker. Reason: All of these dry out normal nasal secretions.
- Reality: Cough and cold medicines can't remove dried nasal discharge from the nose. Neither can antibiotics.
- What to do? Nasal saline (salt water) and suction to the rescue.

### Symptoms of Nasal Congestion: Is Nasal Suction Needed?

- Most nasal congestion just causes a little noisy breathing. Your child is not even aware of it. This doesn't need any treatment.
- Nasal congestion only needs treatment if it interferes with breathing or feeding.
- When a child with a congested nose tries to suck on a bottle or pacifier, it is hard to breathe. Therefore, the baby has to stop feeding to breathe.
- Nasal congestion can also cause loud noisy breathing. The child is often fussy when the breathing reaches this level. Sometimes with noisy breathing, you can't see blockage in the front of the nose. This often means the dried mucus is farther back.
- Infants with trouble breathing or feeding because of their congestion need nasal saline drops to loosen up the dried mucus.

## Care Advice

### 1. Key Points

- Saline (salt water) and nasal suction will help clear nasal congestion.
- Opening the nose will help your child drink, sleep and breathe better.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Use Saline

- Never suction without first loosening the mucus with saline. Reason: Suction alone can't remove dried or sticky mucus.
- You can purchase saline nose drops or spray at drug stores or grocery stores. No prescription is needed.
- If you don't have saline drops, you can use distilled water, bottled water or previously boiled tap water. During the first year of life, only use sterile saline drops.

#### 4. **Nasal Suction - How to Do It If Your Child Needs It**

- Nasal suction must be done gently.
- Put in a few drops of saline with the dropper that comes with the saline. Age: If under 1 year old, use 1 drop at a time.
- If using a suction bulb, compress the bulb and put the tip inside the nasal opening, but not very far. Create a seal by pressing the outer nose against the tip. Then release the bulb so it will pull in secretions.
- If using a nasal aspirator, place the aspirator at the nasal opening and suction with your mouth at the other end of the aspirator.
- Caution: Rinse the suction device with warm water after every use. Clean it with soap and warm water every day.

#### 5. **Prevention of Side Effects From Suctioning**

- Putting the bulb in too far will cause trauma to the nose lining. It will hurt and may cause swelling.
- Sometimes, it causes bleeding. A nosebleed after nasal suction means it was too forceful.
- Suction gently and try to limit it to 4 or less times per day. Suctioning too often can cause increased swelling and congestion. Before breast or bottle feedings are a good time.
- Caution: Never use the suction bulb to put the saline in the nose. Reason: Suction bulbs are usually dirty with germs.

#### 6. **Best Suction Device**

- Buy a suction bulb with a blunt tip. Find one that completely covers the nasal opening.
- Better yet, buy a NoseFrida or Baby Comfy Nose. They are special nasal aspirators that make a seal without entering the nose. They are 10 times more powerful than a suction bulb. They are more expensive (around \$15), but reviews suggest it's worth it.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Your child is having trouble breathing
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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