How to Suction Your Baby’s Nose

When babies get cold viruses, they can get a lot of mucus in their nose. This is normal. If your baby’s nose is so stuffy that it is making it hard to breathe, you may want to suction mucus out of their nose. The best times to suction are right before your child eats, before periods of sleep, and if having trouble breathing.

There are two main kinds of devices you can use for suctioning: a bulb syringe and a nasal aspirator.

**Steps for using a bulb syringe**

1. **Gather supplies** (nose dropper, saline, baby blanket, changing pad).

2. **Get baby ready.** Put your child on their back. It may help to swaddle your baby in a blanket or have another person hold them to keep their hands down.

3. **Put saline in nose.** Put 2 to 3 drops of saline in one side of your baby’s nose using the dropper (use 2 to 3 sprays if you have spray). Let the saline remain in the nose for 1 to 2 minutes before suctioning. You can buy saline at the drug store or make it at home by dissolving ¼ teaspoon of salt in ½ cup of warm tap water. You should make a fresh batch each day and store it in a covered container.

4. **Squeeze the air out of the bulb syringe.**
5. **Insert bulb syringe.** Keeping the syringe squeezed, gently insert the rubber tip ½ inch (no farther) into the nostril that you just put saline in.

6. **Slowly release squeeze.** While the tip is still in the nose, slowly release your squeeze on the bulb to suction out the mucus. Keep the syringe pointed straight toward the back of your baby’s head. Do not angle upwards.

7. **Empty out mucus from bulb.** Remove the bulb syringe from the nose and squeeze it onto a tissue to force out the mucus.

8. **Wipe the bulb syringe and repeat** steps 2 through 6 for the other nostril.

9. **When you are done, clean the device.** Clean the bulb syringe with soapy water and rinse after use.
How to Suction Your Baby’s Nose

Steps for using a nasal aspirator
(a mouth-operated suction device)

WARNING: This product contains small parts that can be a choking hazard. Keep out of the reach of children! Not a toy!

1. **Gather supplies** (nose dropper, saline, baby blanket, changing pad).

2. **Get baby ready.** Put your child on their back. It may help to swaddle your baby in a blanket or have another person hold them to keep their hands down.

3. **Put saline in nose.** Put 2 to 3 drops of saline in one side of your baby’s nose using the dropper (or 2 to 3 sprays if you have spray). Let the saline remain in the nose for 1 to 2 minutes before suctioning. You can buy saline at the drug store or make it at home by dissolving ¼ teaspoon of salt in ½ cup of warm tap water. You should make a fresh batch each day and store it in a covered container.

4. **Insert tip of nozzle into nose.** Place the nozzle of aspirator at the opening of the nostril. Put no more than ½ inch of the aspirator tip up the nose.

5. **Suck.** Use your mouth to gently suck at the end of the mouthpiece. The device has a filter to prevent the mucus from entering your mouth.

6. **Repeat** steps 2 through 5 on your baby’s other nostril.
7. **Clean the device.** Take apart the device and clean the nasal aspirator with soapy water after use. Rinse and air dry.

---

**To Learn More**
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

**Free Interpreter Services**
- In the hospital, ask your child’s nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

---

Seattle Children’s offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children’s will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children’s. However, your child’s needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child’s healthcare provider.

© 2018 Seattle Children’s, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.