

# Jala Neti

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We have been using the neti-pot for many years now, and we are very happy with it. We use it on a regular basis as a preventive method, and actively when a cold strikes. The real advantage in using it for a cold is that the cold never has a chance to enter the nose. No stuffy, running, or inflamed noses. Breathing clear all night without any medicines! Considering that our environment is full of pollutants, both in the house as well as outside, using the neti-pot improves our health.

The following is based on an extract of a very good booklet about neti: Jala Neti, The Yogic Nasal Cleansing Technique by Swami Bhavchaitanya Saraswati. If you want to know more about Neti, the booklet can be ordered at Nunyara Yoga Ashram, P.O. Box 622, Windsor NSW 2756 Australia. Phone/fax Local (045) 66 4477, ISD 61 45 664477.

## Introduction to Jala Neti

Jala Neti, or nasal cleansing using warm salty water, is a very ancient technique which has been passed on for thousands of years by the Yogis for both physical as well as deeper spiritual benefits. Now is possibly a time of the greatest need for such a practice by modern people. With the ever increasing incidence of respiratory illnesses such as asthma, allergies, hay fever, sinusitis, colds, influenzas, etc, as well as the rapid degeneration of spiritual consciousness in some sections of society, the practice of Jala Neti could serve as a panacea for helping to improve the lives of many people. Neti is a practice which is very beneficial to the cleanliness of the eyes, ears, nose, throat, lungs, as well as the thinking processes. There are more than 7 different methods and stages of doing Neti, however we will only be describing the essential beginners ones here which may easily be learned from any yoga teacher experienced in them.

Some neti pots on the market:





## Summary of the Technique

A special Neti Pot is filled with warm, slightly salted water. Do not use chlorinated tap water, use pure water, distilled is always a safe bet. Lean forward over the sink, head half down and turned to the side. The nose cone is placed against one nostril and the position of the head and pot is adjusted to allow the water to flow out of the other nostril. Only breathe through the mouth whilst the water is flowing through the nasal passages. After half a pot has flowed in one direction, change sides, so the water flow is reversed. You can do a second pot if desired. When the water in the pot is finished, the nose must be dried well. Take your time, as the water will come down by itself in a minute or two. "Swimming pool head" may happen before you get the hang of it, and learn just how to hold your head correctly. Also plain water or water that is not quite salty enough may cause that reaction.

The technique is not as hard or uncomfortable as one may at first think. Most people are pleasantly surprised after even their first attempt, at just how simple and effective this method of health maintenance is. Once learned, the practice can be done in about 3 minutes, and like showering and cleaning the teeth, Neti is easily integrated into one's daily routine of body cleansing.

## The benefits of Jala Neti

Neti removes all the dirt and bacteria-filled mucus from within the nose.

It also helps to drain the sinus cavities. This, in turn, will help to re-program the body's natural mechanisms against nasal infections such as hay fever, allergies, sinusitis and other upper respiratory complaints like sore throats and coughs, post nasal drip, inflammation of tonsils and adenoids.

It is beneficial for illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis as it reduces the tendency for mouth breathing by freeing the nostrils of mucus.

It has a cooling and soothing effect on the brain by drawing out excessive heat, and is therefore beneficial for headaches, migraine, epilepsy, temper tantrums, hysteria, depression and general mental tension.

Neti is of great benefit for problems associated with the eyes. It helps flush the tear ducts, encouraging clearer vision and gives a sparkle to the eyes.

It can be beneficial for certain types of ear disorders such as middle ear infections, glue ear, tinnitus.

Neti improves sensitivity of the olfactory nerves, helping to restore lost sense of smell, and thereby benefits the relationship with taste and digestive processes.

It has subtle effects on the pineal and pituitary glands which control the hormonal system. This has a harmonizing effect on emotional behaviors.

Neti affects the psychic center known as Ajna Chakra which helps in awakening higher states of meditation.

It helps to stimulate better powers of visualization and concentration and gives a feeling of lightness and clarity to the mind.

Neti is excellent for those trying to give up smoking. Since it reduces the tendency for mouth breathing, Neti re-sensitizes the nose to the actual pollution of ingesting smoke, thereby de-programming the brain of the physical and psychological addiction.

## Anatomy of Jala Neti Practice

For those who may not have a good idea of the internal workings of the nasal cavities, it may seem like a stupid or dangerous thing to pour warm salty water through one's nose! But when examined with an open mind and a clear picture of the physiological structures involved, fear and misunderstanding can be cleared up. Although there are many factors which govern our body's overall condition, correct nasal function is of primary importance to good health.

In Stage 1, the water simply flows up one nostril to just above the bridge of the nose where the usual air flows meet, and then the water flows down and out the other side. There is usually very little sensation and only a slight smell of salt when done correctly. The water should have been warmed to the same temperature as the blood, and the salinity of the water should be mixed to the same salinity as the blood. As a result, the nose hardly notices the flow through. In Stage 1 there should be no flow of water further up into the nasal passages nor back towards the throat.

In the more advanced Stage 2 version, only attempted after mastery of Stage 1, the water flow is allowed up into the main nasal cavity, down the back of the nasopharynx and into the mouth where it is then spat out. In neither version is there any discomfort or damage to the nasal functions.

Ideally, no water should go into the sinus passages or the Eustachian tubes. However, this may happen if the practitioner breathes incorrectly or blows too strongly when drying. In such an event, a few minutes of air drying will clear out any stray water droplets.

The way in which Jala Neti rinses out the dirt and bacteria-filled mucus lining would be obvious to most people as the warm water loosens and dissolves any internal build ups, and takes them outwards. But what may not be so obvious is that, due to gravity and a venturi effect, the sinus passages are also drained by vacuum pressure from the flow of the water. Whereas it would normally be impossible to drain a 'dead end street' like the sinuses, Jala Neti achieves this ingeniously and simply.

For those with thick mucus conditions as well as those with running sinuses, the relief of sinus pressure can be felt within seconds. As well, the eustachian tubes (which are also 'dead end tunnels') receive exactly the same effects as the sinuses, that being a drawing outwards. Hence Jala Neti is of great benefit for blockages and infections of the middle ear, by draining the tubes to relieve the pressure build up as well as removing germs. In a more detailed examination, it would also be seen that through the effect of osmosis and capillary action, the blood vessels of the nose are stimulated to cleanse as well.

The eyes are also affected beneficially by Neti. The tear ducts, which connect from the eyes into the nasal passages, get the same drawing out effect as the sinuses and this results in a brighter, clearer sense of vision.

The nose is the 'air conditioner' of the body. One of the many functions of the nose is to regulate the temperature and humidity of the incoming air. This is necessary so that the breath does not strike the throat and enter the lungs too hot or cold, too dry or wet. Upon exhalation, the nose also helps to draw out excessive heat from the frontal portion of the brain, which is the part where the heavy thinking is done and where the greatest heat builds up.

People with chronic nasal blockages who end up being habitual mouth breathers, therefore have a cooled throat, which imbalances the thyroid function. They also have cooler lungs, which creates excessive moisture and mucus secretion in that area. Mouth breathers also fail to get enough of the cooling effect from exhalation at the front of the brain and can therefore be described as 'hot heads'.

Some people have 'dry noses' and suffer dry, crusty, nose bleed type problems. Others are 'wets' with the constantly running sinuses and the tissues always up their sleeve! Others have perpetual stuffy and blocked nostrils. Regular practice of Jala Neti helps to establish the correct working environment of temperature and humidity regulation in the nose. Depending on one's living conditions, one's diet, one's personality dispositions, etc, many common ailments can be relieved by

simply re-establishing this balance.

Another aspect of physiology which Jala Neti affects, is the relationship between olfactory function, and the body's nervous systems. According to Science and Medicine, there are two branches of the Autonomic Nervous System called Sympathetic and the Parasympathetic which are constantly working to try to keep a balance of human function. Each of these affect different organs and functions of the body. Basically, one controls the functions of stimulation and the other controls the functions of sedation. This dualistic "push/pull" conflict correlates exactly with what the Yogis say about the forces of Pingala and Ida, or Ha and Tha.

According to Yoga, by balancing nasal breathing function, better balance of the Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Nervous Systems is gained and hence better balance of the whole body's nervous function is achieved. So by cleansing, balancing and manipulating these two complimentary opposite forces, better physical and mental health is maintained. Hence it is one of the known effects of Jala Neti that mental tension and headaches can be relieved, as well as such severe nervous system disorders as epilepsy, and psycho-emotional imbalances like temper tantrums.

### Details of the Method, stage 1

Nasal cleansing can be performed over a sink, a bowl on a table, in the shower or outside.

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1. First fill the Neti Pot with warm water of a temperature suitable for pouring in the nose. Not too hot or cold. Test it in your mouth to really tell if it is right. Pure water is best if available. Mix in salt to the proportion of one teaspoon for half a liter of water. In our 400 ml pot this would be a bit less than one level normal sized teaspoon. Sea salt is best if available. See paragraph following "Recommended Salts for Use in Jala Neti". Mix the salt thoroughly. Taste the water and gargle or spit, just to be sure of the correct mix and temperature. It will



pouring half of the warm salt water into the neti pot for the first rinse



insert into the first nostril

not be as salty as sea water. Adjust if not correct. After several attempts you will be able to recognize the correct mixture.

2. Now slowly bend forward from the waist so that the tip of the nose is the lowest point of the head, and then tilt/roll the head to the right, so that the left nostril is now the lowest point of the nose.

Place the nose cone against the right nostril opening, with slight pressure. Align the spout straight up with the nasal passage, do not block off the tip of the nozzle on the inside of the nose. Open your mouth and hold your breath to start then breathe gently through the mouth. Do not sniff, swallow, talk or have any movement of air through the nose whilst the water is flowing through. Tilt the pot slowly so that water doesn't run out the top of the pot onto your face. Keep the nose cone fully sealed into the nostril so that it doesn't leak. Just wait a few seconds and the water should run out the left nostril. Keep breathing slowly and gently through the mouth. After the water begins to run, wait about 30 seconds for half a pot to flow right to left, and then remove the pot and



raise your head full upright, even back a bit, before you change sides.

tilt the head



hold the head horizontal and move slightly around to get the water flowing up the nostril and out the other nostril.

3. Tip the head slightly forward again, blow out gently through both nostrils to clear water and mucus from the nose.
4. Repeat but with the nose cone entering the other nostril. Do twice on each side if desired or needed, as when you have a cold.
5. After the pot runs dry, stand up, blow out gently through both nostrils and then prepare to dry out the nose.

If, after doing Neti as directed above, there is still a mucus blockage, the whole process may be repeated several times. If this still fails to clear the nose, it is recommended that you visit a doctor to ascertain if there is some structural blockage in the nose. Once a day is usually enough but in sickness it can be done twice. Do not go outside into cold air right after

doing neti.

## Drying the Nose

Drying the nose is important. People with high blood pressure should be careful, if dizziness results when blowing to clear the nose, only do it standing upright.

Bend forward and hang the head upside down so any residual water drains from the nose. Then point the nose towards the knees. In each position, gently breathe in the mouth and out the nose about 10 times. A few droplets of water may run down.

Then stand up to do some rapid breathing (not too hard!) through the nostrils. First do 10 breaths through both nostrils together, sniffing in and out moderately with a bit more emphasis on the exhalation. Then close off the right nostril with one finger and do 10 rapid sniffing breaths through the left nostril only. Then do 10 sniffing breaths through the right nostril only. Finally, do 10 breaths again through both nostrils together. This should clear and dry the nose. If it feels as if there is still some water in there, repeat the drying process again.

## Pay Attention To:

- the angle of the head and/or pot is incorrect
- breathing in through the nose while the water was passing through
- one blocked nostril causes 'damming up'.

Stinging in the nose may be due to:

- too little salt and/or the water being too hot
- newness of the practice which will pass after several attempts
- pollutants in your water or contaminants (dust, bugs, etc.) entering the pot.

If water will not flow freely:

- the end of the nozzle may be blocked against the inside of the nose
- relax the nose, don't tense up
- it may be a temporary mucus blockage, which will clear after several attempts, gargle first
- the water could be too cold which causes the nose to close up
- if it is a permanent blockage, consult a medical practitioner.

Nose Bleeds:

- can happen initially to those with high blood pressure, or those with extremely sensitive, raw or irritated nasal lining. One should desist from the practice and seek guidance before continuing.

## Recommended Frequency of Neti Practice

For general nasal cleanliness, once or twice a day is usually sufficient. Nasal



Cleansing is best practiced first thing in the morning to clear out the night's grogginess and prepare the body for the day's breathing activities. However, if you live or work in a dusty or polluted environment where the nostrils have an increased load of filtering, a good second occasion is upon returning from such work. Neti should always be done before rather than after meals. It can be done up to a maximum of 4 times a day for therapeutic applications: upon waking before breakfast, before lunch, before dinner, before bed; but only upon qualified advice. In the case of a cold, 3 - 4 times a day will give great relief, providing the nose is well dried and this frequency does not induce nose bleeds.

#### Limitations

- Persons who suffer chronic nose bleeds should seek qualified guidance.
- Jala Neti is not contra-indicated for any particular illnesses or ailments per se, but care should be taken and guidance sought, by those with high blood pressure, migraine headaches and those with a history of nasal medications.
- May be done by children with guidance.
- Do not recommend the practice to others or attempt to teach anyone yourself unless fully competent and confident in the technique.
- No other substances or additives other than warm, salty water should be used by the novice.

### Recommended Salts for Use in Jala Neti

Confusion often arises as to which type of salt is best for use in Jala Neti. Ideally pure Sea Salt should be used. Below are some of the different types of salt available on the market today and their suitability for use in Jala Neti.

**Cooking Salt.** This is generally nothing other than pure sea salt, but check on the packet. It varies in coarseness depending on the brand. The finer the better for quick and even dissolving. If you can't get it fine, grind your own from whatever you can buy. Store it airtight to avoid lumping up. Found in most supermarkets and health food shops.

**Table Salt.** This is just finely ground cooking salt with a free-flowing agent in it to stop it lumping up in your salt shaker. Who needs aluminum, silicone or iodine up their nose? Can be used for Jala Neti without any harm when cooking salt is not available, but try to avoid it if possible.

**Vegetable Salt.** This is a compound mixture of salts, herbs and spices, and will do your nose and olfactory senses NO GOOD AT ALL!

**Rock Salt.** Depending on where they come from, rock salts can have a range of other mineral salts in them and are therefore not recommended for Neti. They are usually very big, hard crystals requiring a salt cellar. Nice for cooking with, but not for up your nose.

**Macrobiotic Salt.** Often gray in color. Usually just sea salt from Japan and therefore more expensive than local salt. May be used for Neti with no harm.

