

## **Nasal Washing for 2 - 3 Year Olds**

### **“Making It Clear There’s Nothing To Fear”**

Like getting children this age to do ANYTHING they think is suspect, you have a challenge ahead of you. My best advice is to proceed slowly, be resolved to succeed, and always remember that children learn best by playing and doing.

Begin by allowing plenty of tub play involving the Nasopure wash bottle. Not only does this attach a “non-medical” feel to the bottle, it allows your child to gain familiarity with the sensation of holding and squirting the bottle. Play “squirty” games with your child and a bathtub doll. Suggest, “Let’s wash her tummy – squirt! Let’s wash her ears – squirt! Let’s wash her knees – squirt! Let’s wash her nose – squirt!” Giggle along with your child, making a game out of it. Make your squirty game a nightly routine. Once your child is comfortable using the bottle, add your child to the routine, and slowly and gently, IN A VERY NON-THREATENING way state, “let’s wash Timmy’s knees – squirt!” etc. Aim at his toes, knees, tummy, etc, and squirt gently. Do this for several nights – a week even. It is a game to the child, so allow it to be fun, unhurried. Slowly and GENTLY add your child’s face parts to your squirty games as you continue to squirt the dolls – cheeks, lips, outer nose – don’t forget to giggle and laugh with your child, and don’t squirt him in the eyes.. Be very matter of fact and make it a natural part of the game. This is FUN! (DO NOT SAY, “See, that doesn’t hurt!” It will not occur to your child that it MIGHT hurt, unless you plant the idea!)

Once your child is used to having water in her face – she may want you to gently wipe it off with a washcloth each time she is squirted, and that’s okay too – it is time to start washing the inside of her nose. Make a solution using half a packet of salt and a full bottle of warm water (or even a quarter packet of salt), so it is weak and will not burn at all until she gets used to the solution. Making it the same temperature as her bathwater will also help it stay just like the games she is used to. Keep playing the same games – squirt the baby, squirt your child’s belly button, ears, etc. Then say, “Let’s wash inside your nose a little, too,” and gently squirt just a bit into the inside of one nostril, then quickly and very matter-of-factly move right on and say, ‘let’s wash your big toe - squirt!’ Giggle! “Let’s wash your belly button - squirt!” Giggle! “Let’s wash your OTHER nose – squirt!” Giggle! The idea is to keep moving, keep your child distracted and keep it a game.

If you bathe with your child it is vitally important that you allow her to include you, as well as the doll in the game. In particular, if she sees Mommy squirting water in her nose and giggling – well, there you go!

It is also important to keep in mind that it is human nature to pull away from danger and perceived danger – and drowning ranks right up there. If your child screams and flails about, back off to the squirty games with the doll for several days and avoid squirting your own child until she calms down and quits fighting his baths. Once she is calm and playful, begin squirting her toes and knees for a few days until she regains trust and slowly advance over several days to her tummy, then her chest. Eventually move back to

her ears, nose, forehead, etc. Realize that for naturally fearful children this process may take weeks of “two steps forward, one step backward” progress. Do not become discouraged, but remain upbeat and playful, and DO NOT allow “see, this doesn’t hurt” to creep into your murmurs, regardless of how tempting it becomes!

If fear of being squirted makes bath time becomes a huge struggle, you may want to separate washing the nose from bath time altogether, and treat it more like tooth brushing. However you go about it, it is important to allow game playing, rewards, clapping and positive reinforcement to rule YOUR behavior. Allowing your child as much autonomy as possible – which may be choosing which doll, the color towel to dry off with, or the sticker she is going to put on her chart – will decrease the struggles you encounter. If separated from bath time, three short sessions daily may be preferable to one longer one. It may take some trial and error on your part – like much of parenting. Keep smiling!

As always, be well,

Dr. Hana