

Nasal Washing for 4 - 6 Year Olds

“I Can Do It Myself!”

This is certainly the “I can do it myself” age – if only they could! Start by allowing your child plenty of play time in the tub with the Nasopure wash bottle to acquire a familiarity with it, and attach a non-medical feel to it. It is important to remember that children learn by playing and by doing, and the more comfortable your child feels with the bottle, the more successful she will be in using it for saline nose washes.

Children this age, especially, like to have an assigned task. It is helpful to explain (or have your pediatrician explain) why it is important to get the old, thick, crusty mucous out of their nose. However, if you explain it like that, they will doze off in boredom! Try a creative, simplistic approach of his nose being like a cave, with big booger rocks blocking the entrance. Calling the bottle a “booger blaster” adds a little element of excitement (how often does Mom say “booger?!”), and helps your child envision just what her task involves.

Starting a sticker chart encourages compliance with the daily task and rewards your child’s efforts with (hopefully!) minimal nagging on your part. She can earn a sticker for each day she accomplishes the task, and additional one for doing it cheerfully, or without being asked. (One kid who loved being gross saved all his “boogers” in a bowl and claimed a sticker for each and every one daily –ewwwghw!)

Make a “target” out of a plastic plate, with circles marked off in permanent marker, and attach it to the shower wall. Begin by having your child practice aiming the squirt bottle and scoring a bull’s eye at the target during bath time each evening for a week or so to “prove” her aim is good enough to take on the task of nose washing by herself. This will put her into a competitive, self-empowered mood, rather than feeling victimized by something the doctor and mom are ganging up on her to make her do. After about a week, begin making up a very mild salt water solution and have her start gently squirting it inside her nose, with lots of praise, whooping and clapping and side-line cheering. IMMEDIATELY have her climb out of the shower and put her sticker on her chart for reward. It is vitally important to remember that children this age have a very short attention span, and need FAST feedback for reward to attach praise to effort. Planning to do it at the end of your favorite TV show just won’t cut it, in this instance. You will have to be consistent in your effort, to train her to be consistent in hers. Nose washing in the tub or shower may work best, or doing it over the kitchen or bathroom sink may work better. Experiment around with your child. PLAY with it. Make a game out of it. Keep it fun!

As always, be well,

Dr. Hana