

Neti Pot: A Remedy With Hidden Dangers

The neti pot looks like a genie's lamp. It is often used to flush out bacteria and irritating pollen and mold spores in the nasal passages to relieve sinus pain and allergies. Neti pots have been used for this purpose for centuries, but they can be life threatening if used improperly.

If the neti pot is used incorrectly it can lead to *naegleria fowleri*, a deadly brain infection that comes from contaminated water.

Initial symptoms of *naegleria fowleri* infection begin one to seven days after a person is infected with the germ and include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting and stiff neck.

Later symptoms include confusion, lack of attention to people and surroundings, loss of balance, seizures, and hallucinations. The disease progresses rapidly and usually causes death within one to 12 days of initial symptoms.

New guidelines for safe use of a neti pot

In light of recent deaths of two individuals in the U.S. from *naegleria fowleri* after using neti pots with contaminated water, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued the following guidelines for proper use of neti pots to irrigate sinuses. If you are irrigating, flushing or rinsing your sinuses, use water that has been treated in one of the following ways:

- Distilled
- Sterilized
- Previously boiled for 1 minute (at elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for 3 minutes) and left to cool
- Filtered, using a filter with an absolute pore size of 1 micron or smaller

Rinse the neti pot after each use with water that has been distilled, sterilized, filtered or previously boiled and leave it open to air dry completely. A neti pot should not be shared by multiple people within a household.

Seek medical care immediately if your child or anyone in your family develops a sudden onset of fever, headache, stiff neck or vomiting after using a neti pot or if they have been swimming in warm fresh water recently.