

We're headed into sniffle season. Which at-home remedies for stuffy noses work?

Earlier this fall a Food and Drug Administration panel concluded that oral phenylephrine—a common active ingredient in cold and allergy medicines—is [useless at clearing up congestion](#). Now that many of these over-the-counter drugs officially don't work, what are some other remedies and medications adults and children can turn to?

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Are there other types of remedies that are effective—such as saline solutions, hot showers, chest rubs or even a comforting bowl of chicken noodle soup?

[Rhinologist Andrew Lane:] Saline rinses, which involve moving saltwater through your nasal passages, can be helpful because they can hydrate the nose and eliminate irritants that might be driving inflammation. There are good data to show that [symptoms are improved with nasal saline](#). You can deliver saline using a nasal spray, squeeze bottle or neti pot.

Another popular remedy involves steam. I was taught that steam is perfect for your nose because it's already warm and moist, so your nose can relax. But I've also seen studies showing that cool air helps open the nose. There seem to be [mixed data](#), and it depends on the circumstances. Temperature and ambient humidity seem to impact how congested some people are or at least how congested they feel. A hot shower or a bowl of [hot soup](#) can create steam, and I think that could act like a decongestant.

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