



Epistaxis (nosebleed) Instructions

Most nosebleeds begin at the lower part of the nasal septum, which is the semi-rigid wall that separates the two sides of the nose. This area of the nose contains many small blood vessels which are near the surface, and are easily broken. Once an initial bleed occurs, it is common to have several more bleeds within a week or two while the area is healing. If the nasal lining in this area is not allowed to fully heal, the intermittent bleeding can persist indefinitely.

Nosebleeds are common in dry climates or during winter months when dry, heated indoor air dries the nasal membranes. This drying can result in crusting, cracking and bleeding of the nasal lining. Abnormal nasal anatomy, use of certain nasal sprays, high blood pressure, smoking, and use of blood thinners (Coumadin/warfarin, Lovenox, Aspirin, etc.) are all factors that may increase the likelihood of a nosebleed, or make nosebleeds more severe.

Tips to prevent a nosebleed

- Use saline nasal spray or gel frequently to moisten dry nasal membranes
- A light coating of petroleum jelly (Vaseline® or similar) may be gently applied to the inside of the nostrils at bedtime to help retain moisture in the nasal lining
- Avoid blowing the nose for about 2 weeks after a nosebleed in order to allow the nasal lining to heal
- Try using a humidifier in the bedroom at night
- If you smoke, quit. Smoking dries and irritates the nasal lining
- Avoid straining or bending at the waist (this includes lifting heavy things and straining on the toilet)
- Keep children's fingernails short and discourage nose picking

Tips to deal with an active nosebleed

- Stay calm, or help a young child stay calm. Agitation increases heart rate and blood pressure, which can worsen the bleeding
- Sit up and keep your head higher than the level of your heart
- Lean forward slightly to prevent blood from draining down the throat
- Use the thumb and index finger to pinch together the soft parts of the nose (this puts pressure on the likely bleeding areas)- hold this position for 5-10 minutes
- **DO NOT** pack the inside of the nose with tissue, toilet paper, paper towels or gauze
- If bleeding persists despite pinching the nose for 10 minutes, try gently blowing any clots out of the nose and then spraying a nasal decongestant spray (Afrin® and Neosynephrine® for example)
- Call a doctor if bleeding persists after 30 minutes or occurs after a head injury

[adapted from The American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery website: www.entnet.org]