

# NOSEBLEED

---

## What is a nosebleed?

A nosebleed occurs when the membranes lining the inner nose are disturbed or irritated enough to cause abnormal bleeding. The medical term for nosebleed is epistaxis.

## What causes a nosebleed?

The vast majority of cases result from either trauma (from serious accidents to simple nose picking) and/or **dryness**. Dried nasal mucosa can easily become cracked and bleed. Dryness also results in the formation of scabs and crusts that can tear when the nose is blown or picked. Occasionally, however, if nosebleeds are severe or frequent enough, further evaluation for underlying causes may be required. This includes making sure that the blood pressure is adequately controlled, the blood is able to form clots and stop bleeding normally, etc...

People who are on blood thinning medication, such as Coumadin, Plavix, or aspirin, often have trouble stopping a nosebleed once it starts. This is because these medications prevent clotting. **Don't panic.** Below are simple steps that can help you stop your nosebleed.

If an offending blood vessel is identified, cautery may be beneficial in controlling the bleed. In many instances, however, only a large patch of irritated or dried nasal mucosa is seen without an obvious bleeding site. In severe bleeding, it is sometimes impossible to control the bleed without packing the nose.

## How is it treated?

**If you have been experiencing nosebleeds**, do the following to decrease the frequency and severity of the episodes:

- **Do not take aspirin, Advil, Aleve, Motrin, ibuprofen, Celebrex...** Tylenol (acetaminophen) is the only over the counter pain medication that does not thin out the blood and increase the likelihood of bleeding)
- If you are taking aspirin or any other blood thinning medication (Coumadin, Warfarin, Plavix, Heparin, Lovenox, etc...) for heart problems, stroke prevention or clotting issues, call your primary care physician to see if it is safe to stop these medications temporarily.
- **Humidify your nose**, moisture is your friend! Use over the counter nasal saline (salt water) sprays multiple times a day. There is no such thing as too much. A room humidifier is also helpful. Saline gel (Ayr), Vaseline ointment or Neosporin at night may be beneficial as well.
- Heat causes an increase in blood flow to the nose. It is **best to avoid anything too hot in temperature** – hot showers, saunas, jacuzzis, and even foods that are spicy or too hot in temperature
- **Avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous activity** for about a week (anything that gets your blood pressure or heart rate too high)

- **Do not bend forward** to pick up objects or to tie your shoe. This will cause blood to rush to your head and can trigger a bleeding episode. A good rule of thumb, is always keep your head above your heart.
- **If you need to sneeze, do not hold it in.** Sneeze through your mouth with your mouth open. Holding the sneeze in will suddenly increase the pressure inside the vessels of your nose
- If you are constipated, take stool softeners (every time you bear down, your blood pressure can temporarily go up)

### **If you are having an active nosebleed:**

- Stay calm and do not panic. Stress and anxiety will increase your blood pressure.
- Take a small piece of cotton and soak it in **Afrin** (oxymetazoline) or **Neo-Synephrine** (phenylephrine), place this inside your nostril.
- **Pinch your nose at the opening of the nostrils**, not on the bridge of your nose. This applies pressure to the most likely areas of bleeding. **Hold pressure for at least 5 minutes.** Do not release pressure for even a few seconds. **If you are taking aspirin or any blood thinner, then you must hold pressure for FIFTEEN MINUTES.** This will seem like a very long time. Look at a clock or watch, and make sure the correct amount of time has elapsed before releasing pressure.
- In an upright, seated position, **tilt your head slightly DOWN.** Many people think to hold their head back when they get a nose bleed. This just causes the blood to go down your throat. Tilting your head slightly down allows the blood to sit in your nose and coagulate (turn into a blood clot), this helps the bleeding stop. Do not lie flat or bend your head over too much.
- **Apply something cold** to the bridge of the nose and/or inside the mouth. The cold temperature helps to clamp down the blood vessels and decrease blood flow.

Using these measures, most nosebleeds will stop within ten to fifteen minutes. If the bleeding does not stop, then you may need to go to the nearest emergency room to be evaluated. If this occurs during normal business hours, call our office, and we will accommodate you.

### **How long do the effects last?**

Most nosebleeds stop by themselves within 10 minutes.

### **How can I take care of myself and prevent another nosebleed?**

Follow the treatment prescribed by your doctor. In addition you can:

- Use a cool-mist humidifier.
- Keep a nasal spray such as Neo-Synephrine or Afrin on hand.
- Put bacitracin ointment, Vaseline, or a saline nasal spray inside your nostrils to control dryness and allow healing.
- Avoid injury by nose-picking, rubbing, or forceful blowing
- Don't smoke
- Limit your intake of spicy and hot foods and hot liquids.
- Don't take very hot showers.
- Avoid bending over, straining, and lifting heavy objects. Don't exercise vigorously for a few days.
- Use a laxative to avoid straining during bowel movements.