

Tips to Stop Nosebleeds

A nosebleed can be scary, whether it is happening to you or someone else. While most nosebleeds are minor and can be treated at home, you should know how to treat them and when to seek medical help.

Causes

The nose has many blood vessels inside it. They lie close to the surface and are injured easily. The following list includes some of the most common causes of nosebleeds.

- Dryness of the inside of the nose, and dry crusty mucus, often a result of dry, heated indoor air
- Nose picking
- Injuries (punches to the face, an object stuck up into the nose)
- Colds and allergies
- Lots of sneezing or nose-blowing
- Getting chemicals inside your nostrils

In older people, nosebleeds may be caused by hardening of the arteries, infections, high blood pressure and blood clotting disorders. Drugs like aspirin cause problems with blood clotting because they thin the blood.

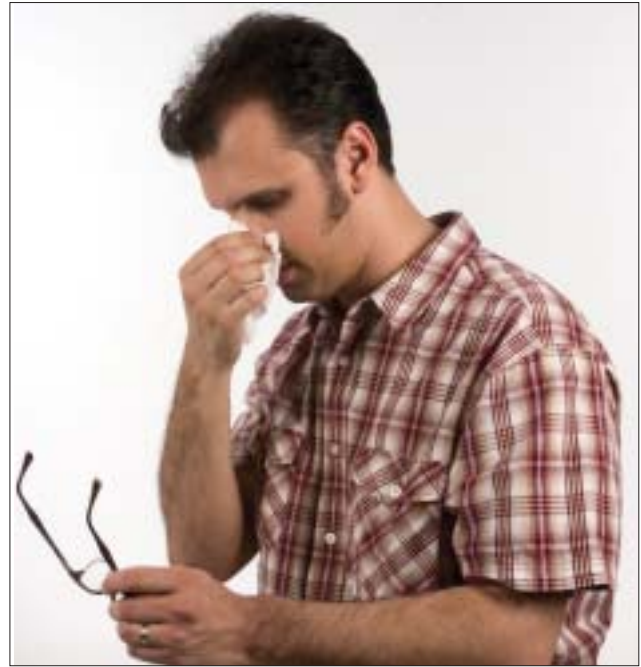
What to Do

- When you have a nosebleed, sit down and lean slightly forward. This lets the blood drain out of your nose instead of down your throat. Swallowing blood can upset your stomach or cause you to gag and inhale blood into your lungs.
- Using your thumb and index finger, squeeze the soft part of your nose so the nostrils are closed. Breathe through your mouth. Hold your nose until the bleeding stops, for about 5-10 minutes.
- Placing a cold ice pack across the bridge of your nose can help stop the bleeding.
- DO NOT stick any gauze or tissue in your nose.
- After your nose has stopped bleeding, don't do anything that may make it start again, such as blowing your nose.

Injury & Serious Illness

Call your healthcare provider if:

- The nosebleed does not stop after 20 minutes.
- The nosebleed happened after an injury — such as a punch to the face, a fall or car accident — or if you think your nose may be broken. A nosebleed after trauma to the nose could be a sign of internal bleeding.
- Frequent nosebleeds may be a sign of a more serious illness or condition, such as leukemia or a nasal tumor.



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Medical Treatment

If you need to seek medical treatment for your nosebleed, your healthcare provider will try to find out where the bleeding is coming from in your nose. He or she will probably ask you some questions and examine your nose. If the bleeding doesn't stop on its own or with pressure applied, the healthcare provider may place gauze in your nose to stop the bleeding.

The healthcare provider may need to cauterize the bleeding vessel, which means using special solutions or a heating device to burn the blood vessel so it stops bleeding. Your doctor will numb your nose before the procedure.

Prevention

To prevent nosebleeds:

- Keep the inside of your nose moist. To do this, gently put a little bit of Vaseline inside your nose with a cotton swab twice a day.
- Use a humidifier at night in your bedroom to reduce the drying effects of indoor heated air.
- Warn your children about nose picking.
- Quit smoking. Smoking dries out your nose and also irritates it.

Resources

American Academy of Family Physicians. (2002, July) *Nosebleeds: What to do when your nose bleeds*. Retrieved March 10, 2005 from the World Wide Web: <http://familydoctor.org/132.xml>

Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia. (2005, Jan. 19) *Nosebleed*. Retrieved March 10, 2005 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003106.htm>

The purpose of this patient education handout is to further explain or remind you about a medical condition. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your healthcare provider. This handout may be reproduced for distribution to patients.