

Patient information

Epistaxis

Ear Nose and Throat Department

Epistaxis is the medical word for nosebleed. It can occur when a blood vessel in the nose bursts.

Who is likely to suffer from nosebleeds? (*)

- Nosebleeds are slightly more common in men than women.
- Nosebleeds tend to affect the elderly but are also very common in children.
- Over half of children aged between six and fifteen years old have nosebleeds regularly.

What causes nosebleeds? (*)

- Many doctors suspect that nosebleeds happen when a fragile blood vessel within the nose breaks, perhaps after a minor injury or infection.
- High blood-pressure and drinking a lot of alcohol may also increase the risk of nosebleeds. It is sensible for all patients to have their blood pressure checked regularly, especially if they are having repeated nosebleeds.
- Nosebleeds are a common side-effect of medications such as Aspirin and Warfarin. These medications change the way blood clots in the body and are commonly prescribed for patients with heart disease. If you are taking any of these medications and you develop nosebleeds, do not stop taking your medication unless advised to do so by a doctor.

What to do if you have a nosebleed.

1. Sit upright and put your head slightly forward.
2. Breathe through your mouth.
3. Spit out any blood that comes into your mouth.
4. Pinch the soft part of your nose with your thumb and forefinger.

Keep the pressure for fifteen minutes (*). This is best timed by the clock/watch.



(*)

5. If you have assistance, suck ice or apply to your forehead or back of neck.
6. Apply a little greasy cream to your nose twice a day i.e., Vaseline, this will keep the scabs moist. Please do not pick your nose to remove the scab it will come off in approximately one week.

When to see your doctor (*)

Warning! If the bleeding is severe and continues after applying pressure for 15 minutes, then you need to be seen by a doctor immediately in your nearest

Emergency Department (A&E).

If the bleeding is minor, always stops with pressure but happens repeatedly, it might be more suitable to consult your own family doctor (GP) for advice.

When can my GP treat nosebleeds? (*)

When nosebleeds are caused by crusting and infection within the nose, your GP can prescribe an antiseptic cream. This can be an effective treatment for nosebleeds.

Repeated treatments with cream for several weeks at a time may be needed. If this does not work then your GP is likely to refer you or your child to an ear, nose and throat specialist.

How do doctors treat nosebleeds? (*)

There are a number of different ways that doctors can treat nosebleeds. In the past, doctors would have usually placed 'packs' of sponge or material into your nose to stop the bleeding. This often worked very well but was rather uncomfortable. Patients also had to stay in hospital for several days.

Packs are still used today but only in specific circumstances. For example, if you are taking Warfarin, packing the nose is often necessary to treat nosebleeds. Under these circumstances, you may need to stay in hospital with your packs in place for a few days. Once the bleeding has stopped and your packs have been removed, the doctors will advise you what to do about your Warfarin prescription.

In most other circumstances, modern technology allows doctors to look for the bleeding point inside your nose and 'seal it off'. This can be a fast and effective treatment for nosebleeds. ENT doctors call this 'Direct' treatment.

'Direct' treatment for nosebleeds involves 'sealing off' the bleeding area inside your nose. The doctor will do this by applying a chemical called 'Silver Nitrate' to the lining of your nose. This is usually done after putting some local anaesthetic solution into the nose. This procedure is not painful and can be a very effective treatment for nosebleeds. (*)

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Further information

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ENT Practitioners

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Review Date: September 2026

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