

Why do we Cauterise or Pack a Nose?

When blood vessels in the nasal passage are broken, this will cause a nose bleed. The nose may then need to be cauterised or packed.

What is Nasal Cautery?

Nasal cautery is performed to seal the broken vessels in the nose. Silver nitrate sticks are used to lightly burn the offending vessel to stop the bleeding.

What is Nasal Packing?

If bleeding is excessive and cannot be controlled by cautery, the doctor will pack the nose with a nasal tampon-like dressing or antiseptic ribbon gauze. A balloon or catheter may also be inserted in the nose and inflated to provide pressure against the broken vessels. You will be admitted to the ward, as the packing will remain in place for up to 72 hours.

What happens after Nasal Packing?

Once the bleeding has been controlled by either cautery or packing, the healing process begins. This takes about one week, but be aware that bleeding could start again. The doctor may recommend a cream or drops to be inserted in the nose. You must not pick or insert anything into your nose, as this may start the bleeding again. If further bleeding occurs, try the first aid treatment described.

Correct First Aid Treatment

1. Stop what you are doing
2. Sit down and lean your head forward over sink or bowl, so that you do not swallow the blood.
3. Breathe through the mouth and use a bowl to spit out any blood.
4. Pinching the nose firmly, just below the hard bone compresses the bleeding vessels
5. Use an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas on your forehead or back of neck.
6. If bleeding persists for more than 45 minutes seek medical assistance.

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Cautery & Nasal Packing



An information leaflet for patients.

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