

Causes of a nosebleed

It is not always possible to give a reason for a nosebleed. Most nosebleeds are caused when a fragile blood vessel touching the inside surface of a nostril is ruptured, usually by one of the following:

- Nose picking
- Rubbing the nose
- Blowing the nose
- Colds
- Hay fever
- Minor injuries to the nose
- Changes in temperature

In the above situations, the bleeding usually lasts only a short time and is comparatively easy to control. If a person happens to have fragile blood vessels that naturally cover the inside surface of the nose, then they are more likely to suffer from reoccurring nosebleeds, particularly from vessels at the entrance of the nose.

In rarer cases, bleeding comes from further back in the nose. This type of nosebleed can be harder to control, and can sometimes require treatment in a hospital A&E department.

Bleeding may last longer and be harder to control if you have;

- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- A blood clotting disorder or if you are taking 'blood thinning' medication (such as warfarin, aspirin, or clopidogrel)

During a nosebleed

- Stay calm. A nosebleed is very rarely a serious threat to health.
- Avoid lying flat, sit up leaning forward over a sink, bowl, or similar.
- With a forefinger and thumb, squeeze the bleeding nostril shut by applying steady firm pressure to the soft fleshy part of the nose immediately beneath the hard bone. Pressure should be applied for at least 15 minutes.
- If bleeding continues or is severe, you will need to attend your local hospital accident and emergency department. It may be necessary to apply a nasal pack, or cauterise the bleed inside your nose.
- Some packs will need to stay in place for 24 hours. If the inside of your nose is cauterised, a scab will eventually form over the treated area and this should be left to heal completely. It is possible that the treating doctor may wish to prescribe a cream to apply to the treated area to aid the healing process.

After a nosebleed

Do try to sit up and lean forward over a sink or bowl if you have a nosebleed.



Do pinch the soft part of your nose just below the bridge and apply steady pressure for at least 15 minutes.



Do place an ice pack, frozen peas pack or similar wrapped in a tea towel to the back of the neck, cooling of the nape of the neck can cause the vessels in the nose to constrict and reduce blood flow.

Do avoid picking or scratching inside your nostril if it has been cauterised in hospital. The crusting discomfort you may feel inside your nose is part of the healing process and disturbance may cause further bleeding and possible infection.

Do try to rest after receiving treatment for a nosebleed.

Don't sneeze as this will encourage fresh bleeding. If unavoidable, try to sneeze with the mouth open.

Don't drink or eat anything hot for 24 hours after a nosebleed, hot drinks can expand the blood vessel in the lining of your nose and cause fresh bleeding.

Don't attempt to blow your nose whilst your nose is bleeding, or during a period of healing following treatment by a doctor.

Don't attempt to remove any packing applied by a doctor or nurse during a visit to hospital.

Don't lift heavy objects or attempt strenuous exercise for one week after a nosebleed has been controlled.

Don't bath or shower for 24 hours after your nosebleed has been controlled.

Aftercare

In most cases, it is not necessary for you to be seen again by a doctor or nurse following treatment for a nosebleed. However, if a doctor feels that you will need a post treatment check, you will be given a follow up appointment in the ENT department.

If following treatment, you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to ring the ENT department at Bedford Hospital on (01234) 792621.

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ENT

Epistaxis (Nosebleed)



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