

Nosebleeds

Nosebleeds are common

Nosebleeds occur at all ages but are very common in children. They occur when a small blood vessel, often just inside the nostril, bursts. These vessels are numerous and are covered by a very thin delicate lining.

Why do I get nosebleeds?

Common causes of nosebleeds include:

- Environment - hot dry weather, very cold dry weather (mountains and snow)
- Infections, viral colds or flus, or local sinus infections
- Nose picking or sticking hard objects in the nose (particularly in children)
- Trauma, from a knock on the nose
- Bleeding disorders or being on blood thinners
- Pushing hard while going to the toilet
- Heavy lifting
- Crying and screaming

In the hospital

Tell the doctor if you feel faint or very unwell immediately. In some circumstances nose bleeds can lead to significant blood loss.

The first line of treatment is to put some spray in your nose and apply constant pressure for 10 minutes. The spray constricts the vessels and applying pressure will stop most bleeds. Constant means not checking until 10 minutes are up. Some Emergency Departments will provide a device to hold your nose.

Children will rarely manage to hold their own nose for 10 minutes.

Ointment, with or without antibiotics, can be used to help keep the area moist and prevent rebleeding.

If pressure fails there are two options available in most Emergency Departments. Chemical cautery can be done where a stick is applied around the bleeding vessels and antibiotic ointment is applied. The other treatment is to pack the nose. This is used for bleeding that occurs in the front of the nose (the most common) and the back of the nose (the more serious). Packing comes in many forms from gauze to special inflatable packers and they are left in, sometimes for up to two days.

When your nose is packed you will most likely be prescribed antibiotics.

If you are discharged, before you leave the hospital you should be clear who you see next and when to remove the pack. Do not do this yourself.

When you get home

You should **avoid** all the things that might make your nose bleed again including:

- Avoid any exertion for a day or heavy physical exertion for week
- Don't pick your nose, blow your nose for 12 hours and don't blow it hard at all
- Avoid hot drinks

Things you should do **straight away**:

- If you have a nasal pack then keep your appointments to remove that (often at 2 days)
- Take antibiotics if prescribed
- Use Vaseline or the ointment given to you by the doctor as directed
- Rest quietly for the next 12 to 24 hours.

