



Nosebleeds (Epistaxis)

What causes a nosebleed?

Most nosebleeds (epistaxis) are relatively minor and will stop in just a few minutes. However, some are quite frightening, and a few are even life threatening. Nosebleeds are classified into two different types.

- **Anterior nosebleed:** Most nosebleeds begin in the lower part of the septum, the semirigid wall that separates the two nostrils of the nose. The septum contains blood vessels that can be broken by a blow to the nose or the edge of a sharp fingernail, or simply from excessive nasal dryness. This type of nosebleed comes from the front of the nose and begins with a flow of blood out one nostril when the patient is sitting or standing.
- **Posterior nosebleed:** In rarer cases, a nosebleed can begin high and deep within the nose and flow down the back of the mouth and throat even if the patient is sitting or standing.

How to stop a nosebleed:

1. First, try to stay calm, especially for a young child. A person who is agitated may bleed more profusely than someone who has been reassured and supported.
2. Blow your nose gently to expel any blood clots in the nasal passages. This may temporarily worsen bleeding.
3. If you have Afrin (oxymetazoline) spray, spray two puffs into each nostril.
4. Pinch all the soft parts of the nose together between your thumb and the side of your index finger. Do NOT pinch the bony part of your nose and do NOT pinch only one side. Hold that position for a full five minutes for children and 10-15 minutes in adults. Time yourself using a clock.
5. Keep head higher than the level of the heart. Sit up or lean forward with the head elevated.
6. Apply ice, crushed in a plastic bag or washcloth, to nose and cheeks.
7. Once you release pressure on your nose, a few clots may come out, but DO NOT blow your nose, place your fingers in your nose, or place tissues or cotton in your nose.
8. If your nose continues to bleed, repeat all these steps one more time.
9. If you continue to bleed after you have repeated the above steps at least two times, contact your doctor or seek emergency care.

Prevention and aftercare

The most important thing you can do is moisturize your nose! The best way to do this is by placing Vaseline on the front of your nasal septum on both sides two times daily, but especially before bedtime.

- Use saline spray such as Ocean Spray (pharmacy brand, Ayr®, NeilMed®) 3-5 times throughout the day.
- Obtain a humidifier for your bedroom to keep the air moisturized.
- Avoid picking your nose.
- Drink plenty of water to keep your nasal lining hydrated.