



ANWAR E.N.T
The Right Choice For Your Health

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Epistaxis (nose bleeds)

What is epistaxis?

Epistaxis is the medical word for bleeding from the nose.

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 6 and 15 years old have nosebleeds regularly.

When are nosebleeds likely to occur?

Nosebleeds are likely to occur either in the morning or late evening but can happen at any time and often appear unexpectedly.

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.

- In children, crusting inside the nose is common and is caused by a minor skin infection called Staphylococcus Aureus. Doctors do not know if this infection actually causes nosebleeds. The infection may simply be introduced into the nose from the child's finger during nose-picking. This is a common habit in children and can damage the lining of the nose, leading to nosebleeds.
- In young people, nosebleeds can be caused by problems in blood clotting. Patients should be aware of prolonged bleeding after any minor cuts, tooth extractions or if the skin bruises easily. Some simple blood tests may be required under these circumstances.

What should you do if you have a minor nosebleed?

Minor bleeding can often be controlled by pressing on the 'fleshy' part of the nose for 15 minutes. This is shown in the photograph below. If this is the first time you have had epistaxis and the bleeding stops after 15 minutes with pressure, no further treatment or tests are likely to be needed. You should avoid straining at the toilet and strenuous exercise for a few days after you have had nosebleeds.



When to see your doctor

If the bleeding is severe and continues after applying pressure for 15 minutes then you need to be seen by a doctor immediately.

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 family doctor (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, especially in children. 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 on 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.