

Emergency Department Discharge Advice

Epistaxis

What causes a nosebleed (epistaxis)?

The **common site** for a nosebleed to start is from just inside the entrance of the nostril, on the nasal septum (the middle harder part of the nostril). Here the blood vessels are quite fragile and can rupture easily for no apparent reason. This happens most commonly in children. This delicate area is also more likely to bleed with the following:

- Picking the nose
- Colds, and blocked stuffy noses such as with hay fever
- Blowing the nose
- Minor injuries to the nose
- Cocaine use

In the above situations, the bleeding tends to last only a short time and is usually easy to control.

The bleeding may last longer and be harder to stop if you have heart failure, high blood pressure, a blood clotting disorder, or are taking 'blood thinning' medicines such as warfarin or aspirin.

Bleeding sometimes comes from other areas further back in the nose. It is sometimes due to uncommon disorders of the nose, or to serious injuries to the nose.

Care at home

Over the next week

- Rest well
- Keep your head above the level of your heart (avoid bending over from your hips - this increases pressure and may make the bleeding start again)
- Avoid dusty, smoky, dirty atmospheres
- Avoid very hot drinks, hot spicy foods and alcohol. These dilate the blood vessels in the nose giving them a tendency to bleed
- Avoid exposure to steam, including from hot baths/ showers

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Do not:

Do not:

- Blow your nose, instead you should sniff gently and dab away any secretions
- Remove any blood clots from your nose

If your nose is bleeding again:

- Stay upright to keep your nose above the level of your heart
- Use ice packs (such as a packet of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel) and hold on your nose for about 10 minutes. Repeat this if necessary
- Press firmly on all of the soft parts on your nose, just below the bony part. You will not benefit from squeezing the bony part
- If you live alone, inform a relative or neighbour that you have had a nose bleed
- If you are over 65 years old, taking Warfarin or Aspirin or have recurrent short nosebleeds inform your doctor when the practice is open that you have had a nose bleed
- If the bleeding continues or if you feel faint then go to your nearest Emergency Department, taking any medication with you