

Taking Care of Nosebleeds: For People Taking Blood Thinners

How can I prevent nosebleeds?

Preventive care is the most important step when it comes to managing nosebleeds. You can buy products used to treat and prevent nosebleeds at your local pharmacy.

It is important to keep your nose moist during the dry months of winter. Some ways to keep your nose moist include:

- Use a nasal saline spray every 2-3 hours while you are awake. You can buy this saline spray from a local pharmacy without a prescription (over-the-counter).
- Use a cool mist humidifier to humidify your room at night while you sleep.
- Coat the inside of your nostril with petroleum jelly 2 times a day, especially at night. You can also place a cotton ball coated in petroleum jelly in the affected nostril overnight.



What can I do when I have a nosebleed?

Nosebleeds can happen at any time, particularly during the cold dry months of winter. While they can be annoying, they are rarely an emergency. Over-the-counter nasal decongestant spray, like oxymetazoline hydrochloride (Afrin®), is very effective at stopping nose bleeds, so it is a good idea to keep a bottle ready. Follow these steps when you have a nosebleed:

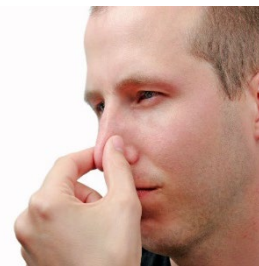
1. Stay calm.
2. Sit or stand up and lean forward. If there is blood in your mouth, spit it out. Do not swallow it.



3. Apply 3 sprays of nasal decongestant spray into the side of your nose that is bleeding.



4. Pinch the soft part of your nose shut.



5. Pinch your nose for 10 minutes. Use a clock to keep track of time. **Resist the urge to look** after a few minutes to see if your nose has stopped bleeding.
6. After 10 minutes, let go of your nose. If it is still bleeding, soak a cotton ball with the nose spray. Place the cotton ball into the bleeding nostril and pinch for 10 minutes. Again, use a clock to time it.
7. Once the bleeding has stopped, do not blow your nose, lift anything heavy, or do heavy housework for 2 days.
8. Check your blood pressure, if possible. High blood pressure can cause nosebleeds.

To watch a video about taking care of nosebleeds, visit bit.ly/MM-NosebleedVideo or scan the QR code.



Can I keep using steroid nasal sprays?

If you use steroid nasal sprays, call your doctor and ask if you need to continue using them. Steroid sprays can dry out your nose and increase your risk for more nosebleeds.

Remember, using nasal saline spray and petroleum jelly are your best tools for preventing nosebleeds.

When should I contact my anticoagulation provider?

- It is important to tell your anticoagulation provider about your nosebleeds. They may want to do a blood test to find out if there have been any other changes in your health. Let your anticoagulation provider know if you have more than 3-4 nosebleeds a week or 6 nosebleeds in a month despite following these tips.
- If you continue to have nosebleeds, you may need an evaluation by an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist.

When should I go to the Emergency Room?

Nosebleeds are annoying but rarely an emergency. However, there are some nosebleed situations when you should **get immediate medical help**:

- Bleeding that does not stop in 30 minutes
- Bleeding that is very heavy, pouring down the back of your throat and out the front of your nose
- Bleeding with other symptoms like:
 - Very high blood pressure

- Lightheadedness
- Chest pain
- Rapid (fast) heart rate that may require treatment

Remember, nosebleeds are common in patients on blood thinners, and they can be scary the first time they happen. Nosebleeds are rarely dangerous and can usually be easily managed at home if you know what to do and when to get help.

The information in this handout is based on doctor recommendations from Michigan Medicine's Department of Otolaryngology.

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