

The Do's and Don'ts for Managing Nosebleeds

What should I do when I have a nosebleed at home?

Nosebleeds can happen at any time, particularly during the cold, dry months of winter. Though they can be an annoyance, they are rarely an emergency.

If you get a nosebleed:

Do the following:

1. Remain calm.
2. Lean forward. If there is blood in your mouth, spit it out; do not swallow it.
3. Apply 3 sprays of decongestant nose spray, such as Afrin, into the side that is bleeding.
4. Pinch the soft part of your nose shut.
5. Pinch the nose for 10 minutes. Use a clock to keep track of time. Resist the urge to peek 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 for 2 days.
8. Check your blood pressure, if possible. High blood pressure can cause nosebleeds.

For a video demonstration of what to do when you get a nosebleed, please view this video: <https://www.uofmhealth.org/media/42391>.

Don't do the following:

1. Do not pack the nose with tissues or other household items like tampons. This can make the bleeding worse.
2. Do not tilt your head back or lie flat. This may cause you to choke on blood. Blood in the stomach can make you sick to your stomach and cause vomiting
3. Do not lift anything heavy, like groceries, or perform physical activities or household chores such as vacuuming. Do not pick up young children or babies. It can take up to 2 full weeks to heal after a nosebleed.

How can I prevent nosebleeds?

Preventative care is the most important step you can take 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, especially during the dry months of winter. The best tools for preventing nosebleeds include:

- Using an over-the-counter nasal saline spray (Ocean/Ayr/other) every 2-3 hours while awake.
- Using a cool mist humidifier to humidify your room at night while you sleep.
- Coating the inside of your nostril with Vaseline or Ayr Saline Nasal Gel two times a day, especially at night. Some patients will place a cotton ball coated in Vaseline in the affected nostril overnight.

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

Remember, using nasal saline spray and an ointment like Vaseline are the best tools for preventing nosebleeds.

When should I contact my health care provider?

It is important to contact your health care provider if you have more than 3-4 nosebleeds per week, or 6 in a month despite following these tips. Patients who take anticoagulation medication and experience frequent and/or more severe nosebleeds should call (734) 936-8051 for an urgent appointment.

When should I go to the Emergency Room?

Nosebleeds are rarely an emergency. However, there are some situations when nosebleeds require you to seek immediate medical attention. These include situations where:

- Bleeding does not stop in 30 minutes
- Bleeding 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, light headedness, chest pain, rapid heart rate that may require treatment

Remember, nosebleeds are rarely dangerous and can be easily managed at home if you know what to do and when to seek help.

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