

NOSEBLEEDS

Getting a nosebleed or seeing a child get one can be dramatic and scary, but most nosebleeds are nothing to worry about. Nosebleeds (medical term is "epistaxis") are very common. Almost every person has had at least one in their lifetime. They are usually caused by dry air or nose-picking.

If your child gets a nosebleed, the important thing is to know how to manage it properly. With the right self-care, most nosebleeds will stop on their own.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

There are two main types of nosebleed, and one can be more serious than the other:

- Anterior nosebleeds originate toward the front of the nose and cause blood to flow out through the nostrils. This is the most common type of nosebleed and it is not usually serious.
- Posterior nosebleeds originate toward the back of the nasal passage, near the throat. Posterior nosebleeds are less common than anterior nosebleeds, but they can be serious and can cause a lot of blood loss. Children do not usually get posterior nosebleeds.

You should seek emergency medical care if your child's nosebleed:

- Involves massive bleeding or makes it hard to breathe
- Causes your child to become pale, fatigued, or disoriented
- Will not stop even after trying the self-care steps outlined below
- Occurs with other serious symptoms, such as chest pain
- Occurs after an injury, such as being hit in the face, and you are concerned that your child could have other injuries (eg, broken bone)
- Will not stop and your child has multiple bruises or other areas of bleeding, or has had repeated nosebleeds.

If your child is having symptoms such as chest pain, lightheadedness, or if bleeding is severe, you should call for emergency medical help. In the United States and Canada, this means calling 911 or taking the child to the hospital.

NOSEBLEED SELF-CARE

With the right self-care, most nosebleeds will stop. Here's what you should do if your child gets one:

1. Gently have the child blow the nose to get rid of some of the clots that have formed inside the nostrils. This may increase the bleeding temporarily, but that's OK. For young children, this step may not be possible.
2. Have the child sit or stand while bending forward slightly at the waist. Do NOT have them lie down or tilt the head back. This may cause them to swallow blood and can lead to vomiting.
3. Spray 2 sprays of Afrin (oxymetazoline) into the nostril on the bleeding side.

4. Grip the soft part of BOTH nostrils at the bottom of the child's nose. Do not grip the bony bridge of your nose, as that will not help the bleeding, and do not apply pressure to just one side, even if the bleeding is only on one side.

5. Squeeze the child's nose closed for at least 5 minutes and use a clock to keep track of the time. Do not release the pressure every so often to check whether the bleeding has stopped. Many people hurt their chances of stopping the bleeding by releasing the pressure too soon.

6. If you want, you can also apply a cold compress or ice pack to the bridge of the child's nose. This may help the blood vessels constrict and slow the bleeding. This step is not usually necessary, but many people like to do it.

If you follow the steps outlined above, and the child's nose continues to bleed, repeat all the steps once more. Apply pressure for a total of at least 20 minutes. If the child continues to bleed, seek emergency medical care at an emergency room.

NOSEBLEED CAUSES

The inside of the nose has a lot of blood vessels that are close to the surface, so it's easy for them to get irritated or injured. Most nosebleeds are caused by nothing more than the irritation from dry or cold air, or by injury caused by nose-picking.

Sometimes people get nosebleeds because they are suffering from allergies or a cold, and their nose has become inflamed. Other times, nosebleeds happen because of an injury to the face caused by a fall, a bike accident, or other trauma. Only rarely are nosebleeds caused by serious issues, such as bleeding disorders, blood vessel abnormalities, or cancer.

In addition, nosebleeds can be a side effect of nose sprays used for allergy symptoms, such as Flonase (Fluticasone). If you use one of these sprays in your child's nose and he or she develops a nosebleed, talk to your health care provider about temporarily stopping the spray. If the child gets frequent nosebleeds, you may need to completely stop using the spray.

What if my child gets repeated nosebleeds? — Frequent nosebleeds can be caused by:

- Constant exposure to dry air
- Consistent use of steroid nasal sprays (such as those used to manage allergies or congestion)
- Recurring colds

In some cases, recurring nosebleeds can be a sign of a bleeding disorder. But when bleeding disorders are present, there are often other clues. For example, children with bleeding disorders tend to bruise easily and may bleed more than expected after minor injuries.

NOSEBLEED TREATMENT

If your child winds up needing medical care for a nosebleed, your health care provider will focus first on making sure the child can breathe properly and on getting the bleeding to stop.

If the bleeding will not stop and the health care provider can see the source of the bleeding, he or she may stop the bleeding using a chemical or an electrical device. In severe cases, health care providers can pack the nose with a sponge, gauze, foam, or other materials that can help

stop the bleeding. Some patients with prolonged, significant bleeding may be given intravenous fluids or blood transfusions.

A health care provider can also check the nose for growths or tumors or for blood vessel abnormalities. A growth or tumor may be more likely if only one nostril bleeds repeatedly or bleeding is associated with foul smelling discharge. Another explanation for one-sided bleeding or odorous discharge is the presence of a foreign body. When examining children with unexplained nosebleeds, health care providers often find beads, rubber erasers, and even button batteries deep inside the nose.

If you have any suspicion that your child could have a small battery in their nose, you should immediately take your child to the emergency department.

NOSEBLEED PREVENTION

If your child gets nosebleeds frequently, the following measures may help reduce the chances of getting a nosebleed:

- Use a humidifier in the child's bedroom while sleeping, especially when the air is very dry
- Keep the child's nose moist using a saline nasal spray or gel (point out toward cheek, not toward middle of nose)
- Encourage children to avoid picking the nose and clip their fingernails short to avoid injury if they pick while you're not looking!