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## SELF-CARE INFORMATION ON NOSEBLEEDS

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This leaflet tells you about Epistaxis also known as nosebleeds. It tells you what to do during a nosebleed and how to treat them.

### **What causes nosebleeds?**

The inside of your nose is full of tiny blood vessels which can bleed if there is a minor injury, such as when you are picking or blowing your nose.

Nosebleeds can also happen if the mucous membrane (moist lining) inside your nose dries out and becomes crusty. This can be caused by an infection, cold weather or the drying effect of central heating. If the mucous membrane becomes inflamed or cracked, it is more likely to bleed if it is disturbed.

### **Are nosebleeds serious?**

Nosebleeds are not usually serious. Frequent or heavy nosebleeds may be a sign of a more serious health problem, such as high blood pressure. A nosebleed can be more serious for older people whose blood takes longer to clot and they are at risk of losing more blood.

If you keep having nosebleeds, you should see your GP. If a serious problem is suspected, you may be referred to an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist for further tests.

Large amounts of bleeding over a long period of time can lead to anaemia. Frequent nosebleeds (more than once a week) or heavy nosebleeds can make anaemia worse if you are losing a lot of blood.

### **Is there anything I should do after a nosebleed?**

You should:

- keep your head upright when bending down.
- try to stay away from people who have a cold or flu.
- avoid alcohol, hot baths, smoking and hot drinks because they expand the blood vessels in the lining of your nose, increasing the chances of bleeding again.
- try not to strain when going to the toilet.
- avoid sport or active exercise for a few days.
- not blow your nose soon after, as this will disturb the healing process.
- not pick the clot or scab.

## What should I do if my nose starts to bleed again?

If you are not feeling faint, you should sit up and lean forward. This will make the blood less likely to go down into your stomach which will make you vomit.

You should pinch the soft part at the end of your nose, as shown in the picture below for 20 - 30 minutes. You should not release the pressure.

You should not try to plug your nose with cotton wool or tissue.

If:

- the bleeding does not stop
- you are feeling dizzy or fainting
- you are vomiting swallowed blood

>>you should contact your GP for further advice.



## How can I prevent a nosebleed?

You can help to prevent nosebleeds by:

- not picking your nose and blowing your nose hard if it is blocked due to a cold or hay fever.
- always following the instructions that come with nasal decongestants.
- talking to your GP if you are prescribed blood-thinning medicines (anticoagulants) and you have a history of nosebleeds.

## Useful contacts

- Ask your pharmacist
- Patient UK - [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)
- NHS Choices, [www.nhs.uk/conditions/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/)

### ***If you have further questions:***

*Call the practice on 01285 653184 or 01285 653122*

Contact 111 for **urgent** medical advice (24 hours)

### ***In an emergency call 999***

Information used in the development of this leaflet Leaflet "About Epistaxis or nosebleeds". © 2010 ENT UK - The Royal College of Surgeons of England