

# Nose Bleeds ('Epistaxis')

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ENT North

## First Aid for Nose Bleeding

- Sit up and lean forward.
- Breathe through the mouth, allowing the blood to run out of your mouth into a towel or tissue.
- Hold the soft portion of the nose and squeeze firmly between the thumb and index finger. Maintain this hold for 10 minutes. NO STOPPING AND LOOKING.
- If possible, suck on some ice and place a cold towel over your face/the back of your neck.
- Keep resting until the bleeding stops.
- Repeat the above if the bleeding recurs after you remove the pressure. If it continues after two full periods of pressure, consider seeking medical help.

If these measures stop the bleeding, rest and do not blow your nose. Follow the advice below to avoid further bleeding. If bleeding is severe or recurs, seek medical advice.

## What to Do After your Blood Nose

- For the next week:
  - Do not blow your nose.
  - Avoid hot showers or baths; use lukewarm water.
  - Do not drink hot fluids and avoid hot food; allow them to cool before drinking/eating. Avoid spicy food.
  - Avoid alcohol.
- After a nosebleed, if your nose feels crusty or blocked, rinse the nose out with salty water ('saline'). Add 2 teaspoons of salt and 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda to one litre of water. Cup a small amount in the palm of your hand and sniff it into your nose. Repeat this morning and night, and as often as you wish during the day, until your nose feels clean and well healed. Store the remaining solution in a clean jar for up to three days.
- Smear a little Vaseline or Paw-Paw Ointment just inside the nostril of the affected side, twice a day, until a few days after the bleeding stops. Use the tip of your little finger to wipe a little on the side wall of the nostril, squeeze the nostril closed to wipe it onto the middle of the nose, then sniff to have the airflow smear it along the deeper part of the nose. Don't use a cotton bud to wipe it into the nose, as this is not necessary and might start a new nosebleed itself.
- Reduce or stop smoking.
- Use paracetamol (Panadol, Panamax etc.) for pain relief and avoid aspirin, disprin, and other anti-inflammatory pain relief medications (e.g., Brufen, Nurofen, Voltaren, Naprosyn, Mobic, Indocid etc.) for at least two weeks.
- If prescribed aspirin by your doctor, please discuss whether it would be safe to stop this for two weeks. In most cases stopping it for this time is very safe. If you are getting recurrent nose bleeds, please discuss stopping aspirin altogether. If you are on other blood thinning medications (e.g., warfarin, clopidogrel, Plavix, Iscover), please discuss whether these can be stopped or the dose reduced, particularly if you are getting recurrent nosebleeds.
- Use medications for your nose as prescribed by your family doctor or ENT Surgeon.
- Have your local doctor monitor your blood pressure. High blood pressure will not start a nosebleed, but will prolong any that occur, and prolonged high blood pressure is dangerous to your health overall.

## Care Following Cautery with your GP, ED Doctor, or ENT Surgeon

- Use medications for your nose as prescribed by your family doctor or ENT Surgeon.
- It is quite normal for there to be some short-lived small bleeds from the raw surface in the first week after cautery, as the lining of the nose heals. These should be getting smaller and less frequent over time.
- Use saline followed by ointment as above twice daily in the side that was cauterized until the lining has healed (there will be no further crusting or irritation at this point, and the nose bleeds should have ceased). For older people, and in winter (with cold, dry air), this is often several weeks.
- If you tend to get small volume bleeds under predictable circumstances, consider using some ointment alone once daily as a preventative measure.
- Sometimes the chemical used for cautery can leak forward and cause a small rim of grey or black discolouration around the nostril. This is a stain (like spilling pen ink on to skin), not a burn, and will resolve over a couple of days as the skin naturally flakes off. It is nothing to worry about.