

The Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic & Hearing Center

HOW TO TREAT A NOSEBLEED

Nosebleeds are a common medical problem – they are usually mild and easily managed without the need to see a doctor or nurse practitioner. However, a small percentage of patients suffer from nosebleeds that are severe, recurrent or persistent after the steps described below; these patients should contact their doctor or go to an Emergency Room.

Causes:

The lining of the nose is very delicate. Any irritation to the nose can injure a small blood vessel and cause bleeding. This irritation may be caused by excessively cold or dry air, or by direct injury to the nose from trauma, fingertips, Q-tips or vigorous nose blowing. As people age, blood vessels within the nose become more delicate and prone to injury. In the event of a nosebleed, we recommend that patients do the following:

1. Sit upright so that the nose is higher than the heart.
2. Lean forward, tipping the face downward; this facilitates blood flow out of the nostrils instead of down the back of the throat.
3. Pinch the nostrils closed tightly near the tip of the nose to prevent blood loss through the nostrils; the blood pooling in the nose will clot and seal the source of the bleeding.
4. Hold pressure on the nostrils for 10 minutes by watch or clock, without letting blood drain through the nostrils.
5. After 10 minutes, release the nasal pressure, and if bleeding persists, hold pressure on the nostrils in the same way for another 10 minutes. Again, be sure to use a clock or watch to assure that pressure is held for the full 10 minutes.
6. Do not blow your nose or sniff in vigorously at any point, as this interrupts the clot that is forming to stop the bleeding; in addition, if you must sneeze, do so through an open mouth.
7. If bleeding persists after holding pressure for 10 minutes 2 times in a row, contact your doctor or go to an Emergency Room.

If you have just had cautery:

1. Avoid nose blowing for 1 week
2. 2 days after cautery, begin Bacitracin®, Neosporin® or Vaseline® to the inside of the nose 3 times per day for 2 weeks.
3. 2 days after cautery, begin saline nasal spray 4 sprays to the inside of the nose 4 times per day for 2 weeks.