

## **Alliance ENT & Hearing Center**

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### **Nosebleeds**

Most nosebleeds are caused by chapping of the mucous membrane over the surface blood vessels in the front of the nasal cavity of your nose. This is commonly caused by dry air (especially during sleep), or by too much picking or rubbing inside the nose. Occasionally a nosebleed comes from deep inside, and tends to run down the back of the throat. Colds, high blood pressure or a blood clotting disorder can make the problem worse.

In many cases, medication or dietary supplements can greatly worsen nosebleeds by inhibiting blood clotting: **avoid aspirin, ibuprofen** (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin), **naproxen** (Aleve, Naprosyn) **Ketoprofen** (Orudis) **and most other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs** if possible. Tylenol should not affect bleeding. **Avoid vitamin E and the supplements ginkgo, garlic, ginseng, and ginger.** These are all blood thinners. Alcohol is also a blood thinner. The prescription drugs **coumadin** and **plavix** always tend to make nosebleeds worse, but check with your doctor before discontinuing.

#### **To stop a nosebleed:**

- Remain calm. A nosebleed is rarely life threatening.
- Sit upright and avoid lying flat.
- With a forefinger, squeeze the bleeding nostril shut by applying steady firm pressure on the side of the lower nose, pushing it against the middle wall of the nose for 15 minutes. For better results, spray Afrin decongestant nasal spray into the bleeding nostril twice, then soak a cotton ball with the Afrin and place it in the bleeding nostril and pinch it shut for 15 minutes. Afrin and similar sprays are available over the counter. They help by shrinking blood vessels temporarily.
- If bleeding continues, or is severe, or if large amounts of blood are going down the back of the throat, contact your doctor or go to an emergency room. A nasal packing or cautery may be needed.

**If the doctor places a nasal pack:** The packing will prevent you from bleeding through your nose. It may cause a sore mouth and throat. Avoid lying flat. Keep your head elevated when lying down. Good oral hygiene including mouthwash may be used to reduce mouth odors. Drink plenty of cool or lukewarm fluids. Do not be alarmed at small amounts of blood-tinged nasal discharge. Small folded gauze taped under the nostrils may be worn and changed if

needed for any oozing. This is better than frequent dabbing at the packed nostril with tissues. Leave the nasal packing itself alone. The doctor may prescribe an antibiotic to be used while the packing is in place.

**After-care of nosebleeds to prevent re-bleeding:** for several days or more after a nosebleed or nasal cautery, it is important to avoid stress on your nose and to heal and chapped areas inside.

1. Keep the inside of you nose moist with plenty of **salt-water (saline) nasal spray**; use several squirts in each nostril at least 4 times daily to help heal chapped areas inside. Many brands are available at your pharmacy without prescription. If possible, put a vaporizer in the bedroom for extra moisture at night.
2. Coat the skin inside each nostril with **Vaseline** twice daily, especially at bedtime. This will soften any crusting and filter irritating dust. Use your little finger (not a Q-tip, which can irritate).
3. Avoid stooping, straining, bending over, or any other exertional activity that would make you turn red in nose blowing or sniffing. You may gently cleanse loose buildup inside your nose with moisturizing nose spray (see #1 above). If you must sneeze, do so with your mouth open.
4. Avoid picking your nose or placing anything in it. Including Q-tips and dry Kleenex. (You may use a moist cotton ball with Afrin as described above for first aid for an active nosebleed). For children, keep nails trimmed.
5. Avoid blood-thinning medications and supplements for about 2 weeks after your last nosebleed. This includes those substances listed in the first paragraph of this information sheet. Even a single baby aspirin is a powerful blood thinner lasting 10 days after it is taken. But if you are on Coumadin, aspirin, or another blood thinner for important medical reasons, make sure it is okay with your primary physician before stopping it.