

Treating a nosebleed (epistaxis)

Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)
Information for Patients

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Introduction

Bleeding from the nose is caused by damage to the blood vessels lining the nose. We call these nosebleeds (epistaxis).

Things that can damage the blood vessels in the nose are:

- Being hit or injured
- Swelling inside the nose (inflammation)
- Using some medicines like nasal sprays
- Having an operation in the nose

Some people can have abnormal blood vessels, or even tumours that cause nosebleeds.

Most nosebleeds stop on their own and are not dangerous. Sometimes we cannot find out what caused the damage to the blood vessels in the nose.

You can also get nosebleeds because of:

- High blood pressure
- Blood clotting disorders
- Environmental factors (such as temperature, humidity, or altitude),
- Medications (such as anticoagulants and antiplatelet),
- Drinking too much alcohol.

Usually a nosebleed will stop when a scab or blood clot forms over the damaged area. If it is disturbed your nose may start to bleed again.

How to protect a scab or blood clot:

- Do not blow, rub or pick your nose
- Do not sneeze through your nose. Instead open your mouth to sneeze.
- Do not drink hot drinks or alcohol for 24 hours (1 day).
- Avoid straining at the toilet and strenuous exercise for a few days. This includes activities that need great energy and effort.

What to do if your nosebleed happens again:

1. Sit down and firmly pinch your nose. Use your finger and thumb to pinch the soft part of your nose, just above your nostrils. You should do this for 15 minutes. Time yourself on a watch or clock.
2. Lean forward and breathe through your mouth. Leaning forward drains the blood down your nose instead of down the back of your throat. Blood running down the back of your throat may make you vomit.
3. Stay sitting, rather than lying down. This reduces the blood pressure in the veins of your nose and will stop more bleeding.
4. You can put an ice pack over the bony area or the bridge of your nose and on the back of your neck. This helps soothe the area and stop the bleeding.
5. If blood continues to drip from your nose do not worry. Use a cloth or bowl to catch the blood.
6. Keep pinching your nose.



After 15 minutes stop pinching your nose to see if the bleeding has stopped. If not, repeat and keep the pressure on your nose for another 15 minutes. Make sure to time this.

If after 30 minutes of total pressure your nose is still bleeding you need to go to the nearest Emergency Department. Have someone drive you or please call 999 for assistance.

If the bleeding is minor, and always stops with pressure but keeps happening, please talk to your GP for advice.

Treating a nosebleed in the Emergency Department

The doctors will treat your nosebleed depending on the cause of the bleeding:

- **Infection:** Nosebleeds can be caused by infection. We treat it with antibiotic and antiseptic cream. You may be prescribed these. The most common cream used has peanut oil in it. If you have a peanut allergy please tell the doctor or nurse. You can then get a different antibiotic and antiseptic cream.
- **Silver nitrate:** This is a chemical we can use if bleeding point can be found and is small. This seals off the area of the bleed. A numbing spray (local anaesthetic) will be sprayed into the nose first before the silver nitrate is applied. The procedure is not painful and can be very effective treatment for nosebleeds. After this procedure (called nasal cautery) you will also need to apply cream to your nose.
- **Nasal packings:** These are commonly used treatments. There are types of packing that can be used. It depends on how serious the bleed is. Most patients will go home with the nasal packing in place, with clear instructions given by the doctor who has seen you. A follow up appointment will also be arranged in the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) department for 48 hours (2 days) later for removal of the nasal pack (depending on its type). However under certain circumstances you may have to stay in the hospital to be observed, and for removal of the nasal packings.

Discharge advice after treatment of the nosebleed in the Emergency Department

Today your nosebleed stopped after:

- ☐ **Simple pressure:** Please follow the advice on page 1.
- ☐ **Silver nitrate nasal cautery:** Please use the cream that you have been prescribed 3 times a day on the affected side. Do this for 2 weeks.
- ☐ **Absorbable pack:** Please see advice below.
- ☐ **Rapid Rhino pack:** Please see advice on the next page.

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

Follow the advice for treating nosebleeds as before.

- You should still squeeze both sides of your nose even if you have a nasal pack in. Hold pressure for 15 minutes without stopping.
- **If the bleeding does not stop after 15 minutes then come back to the Emergency Department.**

Types of packing

Absorbable packing:

This is a dissolvable nasal pack that is placed in the front part of your nose to control bleeding. This packing is made of a substance that absorbs the blood and compresses the bleeding area. It will soften and mix with the clot. It will melt, be absorbed, or fall out after a few days. Follow these guidelines when caring for yourself at home:

- Do not pull on the packing or try to remove it yourself during the first 3 days.
- Do not drink alcohol or hot liquids while the packing is in place. These can dilate blood vessels in your nose and cause bleeding to start again.
- Keep any appointments scheduled for packing removal. If you were asked to remove the packing at home, gently blow your nose to dislodge the pack.
- If the packing stays in place blocking the nasal passage for more than 7 days you may get an infection. If you cannot breathe through that nostril after 7 days, contact your doctor.
- Take any antibiotics that were prescribed until you have finished them.

Rapid Rhino packing:

A nasal pack has been placed in the front part of your nose. This pack is inflated by the doctor to create pressure on the bleeding point to help stop it. Follow these guidelines when caring for yourself at home:

- Do not pull on the packing or try to remove it yourself.
- Get medical advice if the pack becomes loose and you start bleeding. You can go to an Urgent Care Centre or the Emergency Department.
- Do not drink alcohol or hot liquids while the packing is in place. These can dilate blood vessels in your nose and cause bleeding to start again.
- Keep any appointments for packing removal.
- Go to the Emergency Department if your pain level increases.
- Take any antibiotics that were prescribed until you have finished them.

When should I get further medical advice?

Most nosebleeds are not caused by anything serious. However, if you have lasting or unexplained symptoms, or symptoms affecting 1 side of your nose, you should speak to a healthcare professional. Go to your GP, or to the emergency department. Get medical advice if you develop:

- Repeated or unexplained bleeding from 1 nostril.
- Lasting blockage of 1 nostril, particularly if it does not improve with usual treatment.
- Lasting discharge from 1 nostril, especially if blood-stained.
- Lasting loss or change in your sense of smell.
- Facial pain, numbness or swelling, particularly around the cheek or upper lip.
- A new or lasting lump in the neck.
- Any lasting or worsening symptoms affecting 1 side of the nose or face.

Contact details for future problems: Injuries Unit, Emergency Department or Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) Department Leicester Royal Infirmary, switchboard number **0300 303 1573**

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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 જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research