

EPISTAXIS

About Your Diagnosis

Epistaxis is a nosebleed. Rupture of blood vessels somewhere in your nose causes a nosebleed. This may result from an injury such as a blow to the nose, infections, or elevated blood pressure. The most common cause is excessive drying of the nasal passages from dry air, especially in winter.

Treatment

The first-line treatment for epistaxis is direct pressure. Begin by blowing your nose to clear out any blood; then spray 2-3 sprays of an over-the-counter nasal decongestant (i.e. Afrin) into both nasal passages. Next, grasp the nose firmly between the thumb and forefinger and squeeze it for 10-30 minutes without releasing the nose. If this is not successful, it may be necessary to seek emergency medical attention for further treatment (cautery and/or packing).

The DOs

If your nosebleed is caused by elevated blood pressure, you should work with your doctor to get your blood pressure under good control. If you are prone to nosebleeds, you should probably avoid aspirin products as they may slow clotting. Humidification of the air in your home, and, if possible, at work may prevent nosebleeds caused by dry air. Other useful treatments may include placing a small amount of petroleum jelly (i.e. Vaseline) or antibiotic ointment (i.e. Neosporin) inside the opening of the nostrils twice daily to protect it from drying. Salt water nasal sprays used periodically throughout the day will also help prevent drying of the nose. If irritating chemicals or dusts are a problem, avoidance or a filter-type mask may help. Your doctor may prescribe a steroid nasal spray if infections or allergies are a problem.

1. DO NOT BLOW VIGOROUSLY FOR 2 WEEKS
2. USE COOL MIST HUMIDIFIER IN BEDROOM AT NIGHT FOR 2 WEEKS
3. TURN OFF CEILING FAN AT NIGHT FOR 2 WEEKS
4. USE VASELINE OR PRESCRIBED CREAM 2 TIMES DAILY FOR 2 WEEKS
5. FOR ANY RECURRENT NOSE BLEED, USING AFRIN ON THE SIDE OF THE NOSE THAT IS BLEEDING HOLD PRESSURE THEN APPLY VASELINE OR CREAM
6. IF BLEEDING PERSISTS, PLEASE GIVE US A CALL

The DON'Ts

If bleeding is stopped by direct pressure, it is important not to blow the nose vigorously or to pick at any clots, because this may restart the bleeding. If you find that you are prone to nosebleeds, you should try to avoid factors that cause them. Decongestant nasal sprays can be a problem, and you should discuss their use with your doctor. Dry air and picking of the nose cause the majority of nosebleeds. Avoiding both of these situations will help prevent nosebleeds.

When to Call Your Doctor

You should call your doctor if your nose is gushing or if you are having repeated episodes of vomiting from swallowed blood. You need medical attention if applying a nasal decongestant (i.e. Afrin) and direct pressure to your nose for 30 minutes does not control the bleeding. Also, call your doctor if you are having more than three or four nosebleeds a day. You should call your doctor if you know that your nosebleeds are caused by elevated blood pressure or a bleeding problem such as hemophilia or leukemia.