

Nosebleed Fact Sheet

By J. Randall Resser, M.D.

Nosebleeds are a common problem that we see in our clinic and can occur in any age group. They can range from spotty bleeding in the mucous to episodes of uncontrolled profuse bleeding. Multiple medical conditions can contribute to nosebleeds and fortunately most of these can be controlled to limit and/or eliminate these bleeding episodes.

Most commonly bleeding occurs in the anterior, or front part of the nose on the septum, or center wall of the nose. This is because this area has several blood vessels vulnerable to both the drying effect of breathing, and also to finger trauma of nose picking. When this area becomes dry, the lining of the nose in this area can crack and cause the blood vessels underneath to bleed.

The following conditions can contribute to and cause nosebleeds:

1. **High Blood Pressure** -- When the blood pressure is high, the increased pressure can cause blood to be more easily pushed through a damaged blood vessel. If your blood pressure is uncontrolled over 140 systolic, you may need to consult your primary-care physician to help limit your nosebleeds.

2. **Low Platelets and Blood Clotting Factors** -- Certain medical conditions such as cancers and bleeding disorders can interfere with the body's ability to form blood clots. This interferes with the body's own ability to stop nosebleeds.

3. **Medications** -- Aspirin and aspirin type products such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications can interfere with the platelets ability to form blood clot. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications include medicines like ibuprofen (Motrin), naprosyn (Aleve), and Goody's and BC powder. Several cold and flu remedies also include aspirin. If there's a question please ask your doctor or pharmacist. Recently, it has also been shown that some herbal medications, such as high doses of vitamin E, can also interfere with the body's ability to form clots. Often times, these types of medications need to be discontinued to help with nosebleed prevention.

4. **Dryness** -- The nose needs to stay nice and moist to try to prevent any kind of cracking or injury to the nasal lining in blood vessels. The worst time of year for nosebleeds is in the wintertime when the humidity is low. Occasionally, a nasal deviation can cause abnormal airflow that dries out an area on the septum and cause a nosebleed.

5. **Trauma** -- One of the most common reasons for nosebleeds is trauma caused by nose picking or external injury. If an area in your nose is irritated, scratching or picking at it can cause it to easily bleed.



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Recommendations For Preventing Nosebleeds:

1. Keep well hydrated by drinking at least six to eight glasses of water a day.
2. Increase the moisture of the nose by placing Vaseline in the front of the nose twice a day, and irrigating the nose with nasal saline spray often (every 1-2hr)
3. Hold on taking aspirin or aspirin type products.
4. If you have high blood pressure, make sure this is well controlled.
5. Avoid nose picking and other forms of nasal trauma.

What To Do If Your Nose Bleeds:

1. Spray Afrin or a similar 12 hr nasal decongestant spray into the side that is bleeding.
2. With your thumb and forefinger, grasp the fleshy part of the nose and hold firm pressure. If the bleeding is on the front part of the nose it should make it stop. Hold this pressure for 5 minutes on the clock then release. If the nose is still bleeding, repeat. If the nose is still bleeding after trying this 2-3 times you may need to go to the emergency room for evaluation.
3. Call your doctor or go to the emergency room if you cannot get the bleeding to stop, or if you feel dizzy or light headed after a large bleed.

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