

MCLA Health Services

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Self Care Sheet

Nose Bleeds

Most nose bleeds (epistaxis) are minor and generally occur occasionally but could be an indication of something more serious if the bleeding is prolonged and frequent. The nose moistens and warms air as it enters the body. The nose is composed of a complex interior surface with lots of folds and blood vessels. The lining is delicate and vulnerable. Causes of bleeding include trauma from injury, scratching and picking, dry winter air, inflammation from allergies, sinus infections, sinus surgery and nasal growths like polyps. Some people have bleeding or clotting problems which increase chance of bleeding.

How do I treat the nose bleed?

- ⇒ Sit up straight with the head and upper body tilted forward. Keep your mouth open to spit out and not swallow the blood.
- ⇒ Gently blow your nose to loosen up any debris and clear the nasal passages.
- ⇒ Pinch the soft part of the nose between the thumb and index finger. Breathe through your mouth. Hold for at least 5 minutes (watch the clock it can seem forever). Repeat as necessary until the bleeding stops.
- ⇒ Apply an ice pack to the nose and cheek. Use crushed ice in a face cloth. Do not apply ice directly to the skin but have a layer of cloth between the ice and face.
- ⇒ Ease off the pressure if the bleeding has stopped, don't clean out your nose to keep the scab that has formed in place.
- ⇒ Remain upright for a few hours. If the bleeding recurs blow your nose and repeat the above steps.

Home Care and Prevention

- ⇒ You can improve and normalize moisture of the nasal lining to minimize nasal dryness, crusting, irritation and bleeding.
- ⇒ Use Nasal saline spray or gel like Ayr or Ocean several times a day. Generic brands are available.
- ⇒ Nasal irrigation with a Neti Pot or Neil Med bottle and saline solution with pre-measured packets or make your own with 1/2 tsp of salt without iodine and 1/4 tsp of baking soda in 1 cup of water that has been boiled. Samples and instructions are available at Health Services.
- ⇒ Moisture inhalation during a hot shower, lean over a sink or pan of hot water to breathe in the steam (be careful not to burn yourself).
- ⇒ Use a bedside humidifier in winter months.
- ⇒ Apply a bland ointment like Vaseline, A&D or bacitracin just inside each nostril at least 2-4 times a day.
- ⇒ Increase fluid intake to keep the body from drying out. More water and juice. Caffeine dries the body out including the nasal lining.
- ⇒ Medications like aspirin can increase bleeding and antihistamines and decongestants are drying which also increase drying and potential for bleeding.

Follow up at Health Services for further evaluation and treatment. Significant and persistent bleeding will require medical evaluation, possibly packing or cautery to stop the bleeding.