

Managing Nosebleeds in Children

What should I do if my child has a nosebleed?

Nosebleeds can happen at any time, particularly during the cold, dry months of winter. Though they can be annoying, they are rarely an emergency.

If your child develops a nosebleed, do the following:

1. Stay calm.
2. Have your child lean forward. (It is better for them to spit blood out of their mouth instead of swallowing it.)
3. You or your child should pinch the nostrils of their nose together between a thumb and forefinger. (This is the same action used for plugging their nose for swimming.)
4. Continue squeezing the nostrils closed for 5-10 minutes. Use a clock or timer to make you continue squeezing for at least 5 full minutes, and do not stop during that time to check for bleeding.
5. If their nose continues to bleed after 5-10 minutes, squirt one spray of a nasal decongestant like oxymetazoline (Afrin®) into the nostril that is bleeding. Then return to squeezing the nostrils closed for another 5 full minutes.
6. If their nose continues to bleed, repeat steps 3-5 until it stops.

Once the bleeding has stopped, teach your child not to blow their nose for the next week and to avoid removing or picking at scabs in their nose.

How can I prevent nosebleeds?

If your child's nose is dry and they have nasal crusting, this can make it more likely for them to develop nosebleeds.

Do the following to prevent nosebleeds:

- Apply petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) or nasal saline gel (Ayr® gel or NasoGEL) to the inside of each nostril using a cotton swab or finger in the morning and before bed.
- Use a few sprays of nasal saline spray (like Ocean® saline) 2-3 times per day.
- Use a cool mist humidifier in your child's bedroom, especially in winter.
- Teach your child to avoid picking their nose. It may help to keep their fingernails trimmed to prevent scratches inside their nose.

If your child uses a medicated nasal spray, such as FLONASE or Nasocort®, you may want to contact your child's doctor to ask if it is necessary to continue using this medication. These medications can dry out your child's nasal passages.

When should I take my child to the emergency room?

Take your child to the emergency room (ER) if they have any of these symptoms:

- Their nosebleed does not stop after 20 minutes
- Their bleeding from their nose is very fast (it's pouring out of their nose or mouth without slowing)
- Your child develops other symptoms besides their nosebleed, such as lightheadedness, fast heart rate, or looks pale (like they might pass out)

Who should I call if I have questions?

- On Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, please contact the clinic nurse by calling (734) 936-5730.
- On weekends or after 5:00 PM, call (734) 936-6267 and ask for the resident Otolaryngology doctor on call.

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