

# Nosebleeds

The nose is an area of the body that contains many tiny blood vessels that can break easily. Nosebleeds can occur at any age but are most common in young children and adults over 50 years old.

Most nosebleeds (epistaxis) begin in the nasal septum, the wall that separates the two sides of the nose. Nosebleeds are common in dry climates or during the winter months when dry, heated indoor air dehydrates the nasal membranes. Dryness may result in crusting, cracking, and bleeding. Nasal dryness, allergies, picking at the nose, vigorous nose blowing, and infections can lead to nosebleeds. Hereditary clotting disorders and blood thinning medications such as aspirin and Coumadin are common causes of nosebleeds.

## TIPS TO PREVENT A NOSEBLEED

Keep the lining of the nose moist by gently applying a coating of petroleum jelly or an antibiotic ointment twice daily, including at bedtime. Commonly used products include Bacitracin, A and D Ointment, Eucerin, Polysporin, Neosporin, and Vaseline. Keep children's fingernails short and discourage nose-picking. Cigarette smoking should be minimized since it dries out the nose and irritates it. Avoid heavy lifting and blowing the nose forcefully. Avoid hot liquids and food.

## HOW DO I STOP A NOSEBLEED?

Sit up and lean forward so the blood does not drain down the back of the throat. Spray a nasal decongestant such as Afrin in both sides of the nose. Afrin works by constricting the blood vessels in the nose. Firmly pinch the soft part of the nose to apply pressure for 10 minutes at a time. If bleeding persists, soak a cotton ball with the Afrin and place this in the nose as a nasal pack. Reapply pressure for 20 minutes at a time. An ice pack on the bridge of the nose is also helpful to reduce blood flow. Be sure to remove the cotton ball within a few hours. If the bleeding persists, call your doctor or go to the emergency room for further care.



## HOW ARE PERSISTENT NOSEBLEEDS TREATED?

If frequent nosebleeds are a problem, your Desert ENT physician will carefully examine the nose to look for the source of bleeding. Cautery of the bleeding site with silver nitrate sticks or electrocautery will usually stop the bleeding. Apply Polysporin ointment twice daily for 2 weeks in the side that was cauterized. Usually cautery resolves the bleeding. Occasionally this has to be repeated a few times, so call Desert ENT for a follow-up visit if you have further bleeding. Occasionally packing of the nose is required.