

What to Know about Nosebleeds

Nosebleeds, although common, can be frightening to experience. Fortunately, most are easily treated and require no medical intervention. Many people, however, incorrectly treat nosebleeds, so the next time you or your child experiences one, consider these tips for treatment and prevention.

“The first thing to know about nosebleeds is that there are two types - anterior and posterior,” says an osteopathic physician. “Anterior nosebleeds account for about 90% of all nosebleeds and come from the front of the nose, while posterior nosebleeds originate from the deepest part of the nose and typically affect older people, people with high blood pressure, or occur as a result of trauma to the nose.”

The most common causes for anterior nosebleeds are dry air, uncontrolled allergies, cold viruses, and frequent nose picking.

“A dry climate or heated indoor environment can contribute to drying out mucus membranes, leaving crusts inside the nose that itch and then bleed when picked,” says the osteopathic physician.

If nosebleeds occur on a frequent basis (more than once a week), physicians recommend seeing a doctor to either help with healing the irritated blood vessels or test for other health factors contributing to the nosebleeds.

When it comes to treating a nosebleed, old practices like lying back, pinching the bridge of the nose, and applying ice, can actually make the nosebleed last longer. Instead, it is recommended to do the following:

- **Sit upright and lean forward.** When you lean back, blood travels down your throat and can be swallowed, which can irritate the stomach or cause you to choke or cough.
- **Squeeze the tip of the nose,** just below the bony part. This will pool the blood and help it clot.
- **Continue to squeeze for five to ten minutes.** Avoid frequently checking on progress as this may delay the clotting process. If after five or ten minutes, the nose continues to bleed, hold for another five or ten minutes.

“Once the bleeding has stopped, don’t pick or blow your nose,” adds the doctor. “This could remove the clot and halt the blood vessels from healing.”

While this form of treatment should take care of the majority of nosebleeds, seek medical attention if a nosebleed lasts longer than 20 minutes or if there has been trauma to the face or head.

To prevent nosebleeds, use a humidifier in dryer months and treat known allergies with medication and topical treatments, like a moisturizing nose spray, nasal gel, or Vaseline.

“Though they can be alarming, nosebleeds are easy to treat with the right methods and are rarely a cause for concern,” concludes our consulting physician.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians (DOs) provide. DOs are fully licensed to prescribe medicine and practice in all specialty areas, including surgery. DOs are trained to consider the health of the whole person and use their hands to help diagnose and treat their patients.