

Epistaxis

Patient information

You have been given this information leaflet because you have been diagnosed with epistaxis, this is more commonly known as a nose bleed.

Epistaxis usually occurs when a small blood vessel at the front of the nose ruptures. Most bleeding from the nose comes from an area known as Little's area. This is just inside the entrance of the nostril.

Minor spontaneous nose bleeds are very common.

Most nose bleeds occur due to the rupture of fragile blood vessels with no apparent reason. This may be exacerbated by having a common cold, picking the nose or nose blowing. Rarely nose bleeds occur due to blood clotting disorders or blood thinning medication.

You should always let the doctor know if you have a blood clotting disorder, or are on blood thinning medication (i.e. warfarin or rivaroxaban).

Treating Epistaxis

The main treatment for a nose bleed is pressure to the bleeding area.

- Pinch the lower end of the nose with the index finger and thumb
- This should block both nostrils
- Do not lean your head back, this will cause blood to go down your throat or airway
- A cold flannel or ice pack applied to the forehead can slow bleeding
- **Continue this for 10 minutes**
- If bleeding has stopped after this do not pick or blow your nose
- If bleeding continues repeat pressure for a **further 10 minutes**
- **If bleeding still continues after this then you should seek medical help**

Treatment at hospital

Some patients with persistent epistaxis will have cauterisation applied (a small burn) to the offending blood vessel, or referral to an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) clinic.

Most patients only need repeated pressure or the application of a cream such as Naseptin. The cream provides a barrier to allow a scab to form in your nose, this can be as effective as cauterisation. Some patients may need blood tests while at hospital. Most minor epistaxis do not need any investigation.

Emergency Department
and Minor Injury Unit



Treating Pain

If needed, painkiller options include the following:

Paracetamol is usually recommended for painful sprains or strains.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling. You can buy some types (eg, ibuprofen) at pharmacies, without a prescription either topically as a cream, or as tablets. You should check the medication advice leaflet to ensure you are safe to take these i.e some patients with asthma or stomach ulcers may not be able to.

If this does not help, you may need an additional stronger painkiller – such as codeine – you should discuss this with your pharmacist or GP.

Further Information

For further advice and information about your condition:

Please choose from the following:

- 'NHS Patient Choices' website: www.nhs.uk
- 'Making Lives Better' patient website: www.patient.info
- Telephone NHS 111
- Contact your General Practitioner

Contact details:

- The James Cook University Hospital: 01642 850850
Marton Road, Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW
 - The Friarage: 01609 779911
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