

**Southwest Virginia ENT &
Facial Plastics**

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Nosebleeds (Epistaxis)

Nosebleeding is a very common problem. The nose gets a very rich blood supply from many different arteries in the head and neck. Most of the time the nasal septum is the source of the bleeding. The septum is the wall of tissue in the nose that divides the right side of the nose from the left. Especially in children, most nose bleeds are brought on by some sort of trauma. This might be from fingers, tissues, q-tips, etc. Therefore, if you are having trouble with nose bleeds, do not put anything up inside your nose, as it can cause further bleeding. If you are using nasal sprays, make sure you aim towards the back of the eye on the side of the nose that you are spraying. This directs the spray of medicine away from the septum, which can cause bleeding.

In adults, nosebleeds are often caused or worsened by high blood pressure and/or blood thinners (like aspirin, Plavix, Coumadin (warfarin), Effient, and others). If you take a blood thinner make sure to let your ENT as well your prescribing doctor know and consider checking your BP.

Treatment of your nosebleeds may involve cauterization of the bleeding sites in the nose, either in the office or sometime in the operating room. Sometimes the nose needs to be packed to control bleeding.

If your nose has been cauterized, take care of the nose afterwards in this fashion:

- Use a nasal saline spray at least 3 times/day. You can use this more often if you wish.
- Apply Vaseline (or antibiotic ointment) to the cauterized nostril(s) 2x/day for one week. After one week, use only Vaseline.
- For adults, use a pea-sized amount on the tip of your finger, place it up in the nostril, and squish your nostrils together to spread it out inside. For children use a smaller, more appropriate amount.

If you have a nosebleed at home, here is how you can control it:

- Use three sprays of an over-the-counter (OTC) decongestant nasal spray (oxymetazoline is the generic name, Afrin, Vicks sinus, etc) on whatever side is bleeding
- Hold pressure on the nose with two fingers. This should be on the lower, flexible part of the nose (not the bony upper portion). You should not be able to breathe at all through your nose if you are doing this properly
- Hold the nose for 5 minutes (looking at a clock)
- Release nose. If it is still bleeding, repeat the above steps
- If this does not control the bleeding after 30 minutes; call the office during the daytime, or go to an emergency room at night or on a weekend/holiday.

If you have nasal packing in place:

- You likely will have antibiotics to take while the pack is in place
- If you dab at the packing, you will get some bloody fluid on the tissue-THIS IS NORMAL
- If you have frank bleeding coming around the packing, use some OTC Afrin (oxymetazoline), which is available from any drug store, and spray it 3 times on the pack every 5 minutes as needed. If you were given an empty syringe, you can use it to inflate the pack
- If the bleeding continues after 30 minutes, call your doctor or head to the office or ER for further treatment and evaluation.