

Nose Bleeds

Nosebleeds are not usually a sign of anything serious. They're common, particularly in children, and most can be easily treated at home.

Non-urgent advice: See a GP if:

- a child under 2 years old has a nosebleed
- you have regular nosebleeds
- you have symptoms of anaemia – such as a faster heartbeat, shortness of breath and pale skin
- you're taking a blood-thinning medicine, such as warfarin
- you have a condition that means your blood cannot clot properly, such as haemophilia

The GP might want to test you for haemophilia or for other conditions like anaemia.

Immediate action required: Go to A&E if:

- your nosebleed lasts longer than 10 to 15 minutes
- the bleeding seems excessive
- you're swallowing a large amount of blood that makes you vomit
- the bleeding started after a blow to your head
- you're feeling weak or dizzy
- you're having difficulty breathing

Causes of a nosebleed

The inside of the nose is delicate, and nosebleeds happen when it's damaged.

This can be caused by:

- picking your nose
- blowing your nose too hard
- the inside of your nose being too dry (maybe because of a change in air temperature)

Nosebleeds that need medical attention can come from deeper inside the nose and usually affect adults.

They can be caused by:

- an injury or broken nose
- high blood pressure
- conditions that affect the blood vessels or how the blood clots
- certain medicines, like warfarin

Sometimes the cause of a nosebleed is unknown.

Certain people are more prone to getting nosebleeds, including:

- children (they usually grow out of them by 11)
- elderly people
- pregnant women

How to stop a nosebleed yourself

If you have a nosebleed, you should:

- sit down and lean forward, with your head tilted forward
- pinch your nose just above your nostrils for 10 to 15 minutes
- breathe through your mouth

Holding an icepack (or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel) on the top of the nose may help reduce the blood flow. But the evidence to show it works is not very strong.