

Nosebleeds in children

Nosebleeds (also called epistaxis) are very common in young children.

Growths in the nose or blood clotting disorders that cause nosebleeds in children are very rare.

Nosebleeds will often settle down on their own but medical treatment may sometimes be required if there is a history of persistent, heavy bleeding.

Causes

The nose contains lots of small blood vessels that run in a delicate mucosal lining.

A number of vessels come together at the front of the nose to supply the cartilage of the septum (the partition between the nostrils). This is called Little's Area and is the most common place for nosebleeds to happen.

Anything that irritates this lining and exposes these blood vessels can cause nosebleeds, for example, dry air, crusting, allergies, rubbing or picking the nose.

Treatment options

First aid

- Sit forward with your head down.
- Firmly pinch the soft part at the front of the nose for 10 to 15 minutes. This puts pressure on the vessels and helps to stop the bleeding.
- Put ice on the forehead and back of the neck.

- Avoid putting anything into the nose such as tissue paper as this can cause further damage to the lining.
- If the bleeding does not stop after 30 to 45 minutes, call 111 for advice or go to your nearest emergency department (A&E).

When the bleeding has stopped, for the next 10 days you should avoid:

- rubbing, picking or blowing the nose
- heavy exercise and sports
- hot showers and baths
- hot foods

It is common for further nosebleeds to happen. Repeat the first aid steps each time it happens.

Medical treatment

An antibiotic ointment, such as Bactroban® or Naseptin®, or Vaseline®, can help a dry and crusty nose to heal and prevent further bleeds.

Antibiotic ointments can be prescribed by your GP and can be used 2 to 3 times a day for 2 weeks.

Vaseline can also be used in a similar way for an unlimited amount of time.

To apply squeeze a pea-sized amount of ointment into each nostril and gently pinch the nose to disperse. Avoid putting a finger or applicator directly into the nose as this can risk damaging the delicate lining.

Silver nitrate cauterisation

Silver nitrate is a chemical that can be applied for a few seconds to seal a blood vessel. If the doctor sees very prominent blood vessels which are likely to be the cause of bleeding, cautery can be helpful.

A little local anaesthetic will be sprayed or applied with cotton wool beforehand to numb the nose so that it is not painful.

The silver nitrate stick will be held against the area that is bleeding for a few seconds. This is to reduce any risk of damage to the nose. Only one side can be done at a time.

As with the other treatments, this is not a cure for nosebleeds and they can recur as the blood vessels reform.

Instructions after having a silver nitrate cauterisation

Silver nitrate can form a black residue when it reacts in the nose that can potentially stain the surrounding skin.

Vaseline should be applied around the nose after the cauterisation to stop the silver nitrate staining the skin.

If any residue does run onto the skin it should be wiped off immediately with a tissue.

Use the antibiotic ointment as prescribed.

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801
email gstt.pals-gstt@nhs.net

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please contact the service your child is seeing.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone** 111
web www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web** www.nhs.uk

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Leaflet number: 5481/VER1

Date published: March 2024

Review date: March 2027

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