

Nosebleeds and nasal packing

This information sheet is designed to provide you with information on nosebleeds and nasal packing. If you have any further questions, please discuss these with our staff.

About nosebleeds?

The blood vessels within the mucosa (lining tissue) of the nose are fragile and can easily tear.

Nosebleeds are very common and in the majority of cases can be managed at home with first aid measures. However, in a small number of cases the nosebleed can be more severe and require hospital treatment.

. Some common reasons for nosebleeds include:

- Picking of the nose, other nasal trauma, or the presence of a foreign body
- Dry nasal mucosa such as from air conditioning, cold weather
- Blowing your nose too hard or too often
- Physical or emotional stress
- High blood pressure

Nosebleeds are often prolonged due to certain anticoagulant or antiplatelet medications such as Warfarin, Apixiban, Aspirin or Clopidogrel. If you are on such medication, do not stop taking it unless instructed to do so by a doctor.

How to treat a nosebleed

In the majority of cases nosebleeds can be treated at home with the following measures:

- Sit up right leaning your head forward (to avoid any blood trickling down the back of your nose into your throat)
- Spit out any blood that does trickles into your mouth
- Squeeze the entire soft part of front of your nose firmly

- Hold for 15 minutes, and to allow the bleeding to stop, avoid releasing too early
- If possible apply an ice pack or the back of your neck or forehead.

If after 15 minutes the bleeding does not stop then attend the emergency department.

What happens next?

If the bleeding doesn't stop with the above measures then you will require further treatment. This will involve assessing the nose and where possible identifying the bleeding point and cauterising this area. This is done under local anaesthetic. If the bleeding is controlled then you will be able to go home.

In some cases, the bleeding continues and a nasal pack is required. The pack is inserted into the nose to control the bleeding for 24-48 hours. The most common types of nasal packs used are the Rapid Rhino® or Merocel®.

What to expect from a nasal packing?

It is normal to experience some pain/discomfort when the nasal pack is inserted but this will settle with time. You may find it helpful to take pain killers such as paracetamol to help with the discomfort.

As the nasal pack fills the opening to the nostril you will not be able to breathe through the affected nostril but this is temporary, until the pack is removed.

Going home with a nasal pack?

If the nasal pack has successfully stopped the nosebleed, then it is possible that you will be able to go home with the nasal pack and return one to two days later for removal. Before discharging you home, your doctor will ensure it's safe to do so, and give you details of when to return to hospital for the pack to be removed.

Whilst the nasal pack is in place:

- Do make sure you take any medications if prescribed by the doctor.
- Do ensure you attend your appointment for the removal of the nasal pack
- Do not pull or try to adjust the nasal pack.
- Do not blow your nose
- Avoid breathing in tobacco smoke or other fumes that may irritate your nose.

What to do if my nose starts to bleed again?

- Follow the advice for treating nosebleeds as before
- You should still squeeze both sides of your nose even if you have a nasal pack in place

- Hold for 15 minutes without stopping

If after 15 minutes, the bleeding is not stopping, then make your way back to A&E.

When to seek medical help?

If you experience any of the issues below go to A&E immediately, if:

- You cannot stop the bleeding after 15 minutes
- You begin to cough up blood from the back of your throat
- The nasal pack becomes loose and moves in/out of your nose
- You feel dizzy, weak or experience difficulty in standing up
- You develop difficulty in breathing
- Your pain level increases
- You have any other concerns

What can I expect when the pack is removed?

You will be given an appointment to attend the hospital for the removal of the nasal pack. When the nasal pack is removed the doctor will assess your nose and apply cautery to any visible blood vessels. In some cases some absorbable nasal packing is used to prevent a further nosebleed. This type of packing will dissolve over a few days to a week and does not need to be removed. Your doctor may also advise you to use a nasal ointment such as Naseptin® or Vaseline® to the nose for a week following cautery.

After the pack is removed you should not need any further treatment. However, you may be given patient initiated follow-up (PIFU) with ENT, in case you have any further issues with nosebleeds for the following six months.

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.