

# Nosebleeds

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This handout covers the causes of nosebleeds, treatment options and ways to prevent them.

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## What are nosebleeds?

Most nosebleeds (bleeding from the nasal cavity) happen when the small blood vessels that line the inside of the nose break and bleed. These blood vessels are very fragile and lie close to the surface, which makes them easy to injure.

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## What causes nosebleeds?

More than 90% of nosebleeds in children come from the front and center of the nose (septum).

Common reasons are:

- Nose picking
- Allergies
- Frequent nose blowing (during colds/flu)
- Dry, heated, indoor air which causes the inside of the nose to become cracked, crusted and itchy

Injuries to the outside of the nose, face or head can cause nosebleeds. If this happens, see a healthcare provider right away.

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## How are they treated?

To treat nosebleeds, we want to reduce inflammation and prevent drying and irritation. If your child's nosebleeds continue or get worse, tell your provider.

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## If your child has a nosebleed, follow these steps:

1. Have your child sit up and lean forward in a chair or on your lap.
  2. Pinch the soft part of your child's nostrils (just below the bony part) together firmly between your thumb and forefinger and hold for 10 full minutes.
    - If bleeding has stopped, gently apply a small amount of ointment (Aquaphor ointment or AYR Saline Gel) into each nostril.
    - If still bleeding, continue to hold pressure for another 10 minutes.
  3. If your child has a nosebleed lasting longer than 20 minutes, feels weak or dizzy, or has a nosebleed after an injury to the head or face, go to an emergency room right away.
  4. Contact your healthcare provider if your child has nosebleeds that frequently last 15 minutes or more.
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### To Learn More

- Otolaryngology  
206-987-2105
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



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### How to prevent nosebleeds

- Use nasal saline spray 2 or 3 times a day to keep the nasal passages moist and rinse out allergens. For more information, see our handout “Nasal Saline” at [seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE838.pdf](https://seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE838.pdf).
- Get a moisturizing ointment like Aquaphor, AYR Saline Gel or antibiotic ointment, if prescribed.
  - Put a pea-sized amount on a cotton swab or a clean finger. Apply the ointment to the front and center of the nose (septum) in both nostrils.
  - Gently pinch your child’s nose together to help spread the ointment.
  - Do this daily, in the morning and at bedtime, for 2 weeks.
- Encourage children to avoid picking or putting anything in their nose.
- If your child has allergies, talk to your healthcare provider about treatment. Nasal passages are less likely to bleed (less irritated and inflamed) when allergies are under control.
- Wear helmets (and other protective gear) during sports like hockey, football, baseball, skiing/snowboarding, skateboarding, bicycling, etc.