

# What to do when you have a nosebleed

## Stopping an epistaxis



You often have nosebleeds. This bleeding is called epistaxis. This sheet explains:

- Why you have a nosebleed
- How to stop bleeding
- What to do to avoid bleeding again

### What is an epistaxis?

It's when your nose is bleeding.

The inside of the nose contains a lot of blood vessels. They help make the air you breathe warmer and more humid.

You have a nosebleed because of an injury to these blood vessels.

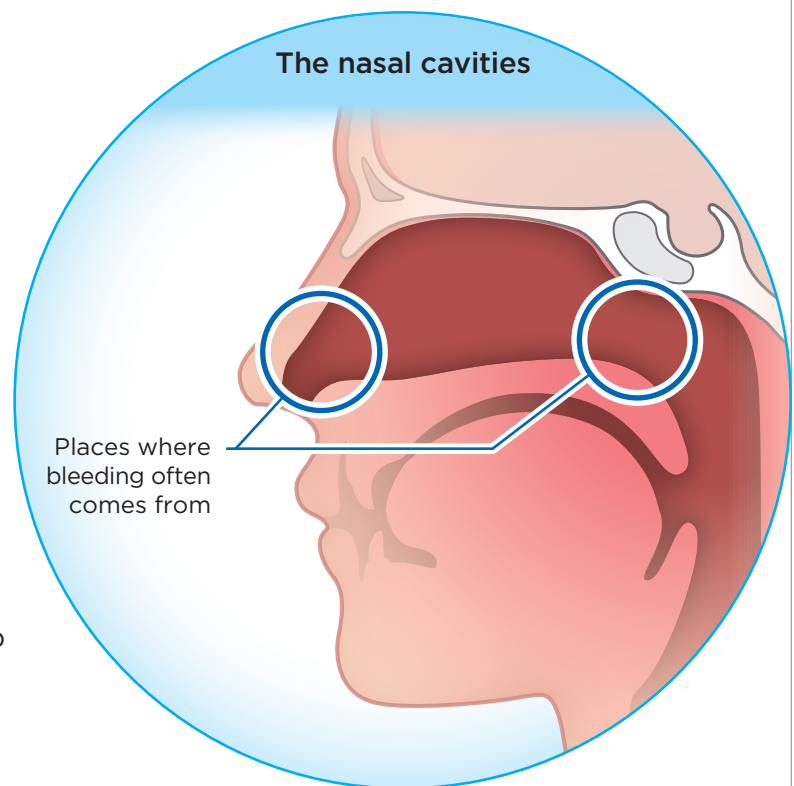
### Why is my nose bleeding?

Often, it's for one of these reasons:

- You've scratched the inside of your nose too much with a finger or a tissue.
- The inside of your nose is too dry. This may be caused by air conditioning, heating, or a device that helps you breathe while you sleep (CPAP).
- You spray a medication into your nose.
- You have high blood pressure.
- You've had surgery of the sinuses or nasal cavities.

If it's none of the above, it may be for one of these less common reasons:

- You're taking oral blood-thinning medications, such as aspirin, an anticoagulant, or an antiplatelet agent.



- You have a health condition that causes your blood to be too thin or too thick.
- You have a disease or a growth that is affecting the blood vessels in the nose.
- You have taken cocaine or drugs through your nose.

## How to stop a nosebleed?

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- 1 Try to stay as calm as possible.
- 2 Sit down and tilt your head a little **forward**. This is to avoid swallowing blood. Breathe through your mouth at the same time.



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- 3 Pinch the soft part of the nose just under the bone with your fingers.



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- 4 Do this **for 10 minutes** without stopping. Look at a watch or clock to make sure you pinch long enough.



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- 5 Do this a second time, as needed. You can even do it a third time if necessary.
  - 6 Apply a cold washcloth or a small ice pack to your nose and forehead.



### CAUTION

If your nose is still bleeding after doing all these steps 3 times, go to the emergency room.

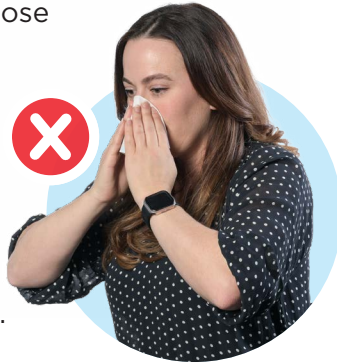
## When should I see my family doctor or ENT doctor?

Make an appointment to see a doctor if:

- The steps to stop the bleeding work, but you bleed often and don't know why.
- You had a nose operation recently.

## How can I avoid bleeding again?

- Avoid blowing your nose for 1 week after a nosebleed. This is to allow the inside of your nose to heal. After 1 week, blow your nose gently.
- Sneeze with your mouth open for 1 week.
- Don't put anything in your nose. For example, don't insert a finger, a cotton swab (Q-tips), or a tissue.
- Apply a moisturizing nose gel or petroleum jelly to the inner rim of your nostrils.
- Avoid places with smoke, dust, or chemicals in the air.
- Avoid strenuous physical exertion, such as heavy lifting, for 1 week.
- Don't stay long in a place where the air is cold and dry. Make the air humid in your bedroom by using a **humidifier**.
- Check your blood pressure. If it's high, consult your family doctor.
- Avoid spraying medication into your nose.



If you're taking blood-thinning medications, talk with your doctor, who'll tell you what to do.



## Can I be treated for this problem?

Your doctor will first assess you to find the cause.

Depending on your situation, the doctor may suggest:

- Inserting a gauze tampon, called a nasal pack, in your nose.
- Inserting a small balloon that is inflated inside your nose. It applies pressure to the blood vessels to stop the bleeding. This is used only in an emergency. It's done to stop the bleeding until a solution is found.
- Burning the blood vessels so that they stop bleeding. This is called cauterization. There are 2 types.
  - **Cauterization of blood vessels:** The bleeding vessels are burned using a chemical or an electric current. See the health fact sheet [Traiter les saignements par la chaleur - La cautérisation](#). (French only). You'll be given medication to numb the pain while they're being cauterized.
  - **Cauterization under general anesthesia:** This is done when your nose keeps bleeding even after other treatments have been tried. You'll be put to sleep while the blood vessels are cauterized using an electric current. They're cauterized so that they stop bleeding for good. This is done in an operating room.

## When should I go to the emergency room?

Go to the nearest emergency room when you have any of these signs:

- Your nose keeps bleeding after you've done all the steps to stop it
- The amount of blood is similar to the amount of water coming out of a tap
- A lot of blood is flowing into your mouth
- You feel unwell or dizzy
- You feel out of breath
- Your heart isn't beating as usual (palpitations)
- You feel tired or your skin is pale

If you have other signs and you're not sure if you need to go to the emergency room, call the **CHUM Patient Health Line** at **514 890-8086**.

A nurse will assess you and guide you to the right service.



### CHUM PATIENT HEALTH LINE

**514 890-8086**

**24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

You're a CHUM patient? You have questions about your health status? A nurse can help you.



### Questions




### Resource people and contacts




### USEFUL RESOURCES

Other CHUM health fact sheets are available. Ask your care team which fact sheets can help you.



You can also read them online. [chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)

*The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.*

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal [chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)