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Treating Nosebleeds

A nosebleed in a child can be a scary experience for parent and child. Nosebleeds usually occur when kids pick their noses and break small blood vessels in the lining, or when their noses are dry and irritated (especially when the weather is colder or very hot). Babies rarely have nosebleeds, but toddlers and school-age children often do. A tendency to have nosebleeds often runs in the family.

A nosebleed usually comes on suddenly, with blood flowing freely from one nostril. A child who has nosebleeds at night may swallow the blood in her sleep and vomit it up or pass it in the stools. Most nosebleeds stop by themselves within a few minutes. If they reoccur, Vaseline, neosporin, or saline gel (available at the pharmacy) applied inside the nose can keep the lining moist and help prevent further reoccurrence. During very dry weather it may also be helpful to use saline nose drops or spray several times a day to increase moisture inside the nose.

TIPS FOR STOPPING A NOSEBLEED

- Stay calm; the nosebleed is probably not serious and should not upset the child.
- Keep the child sitting or standing, and leaning slightly forward towards their knees. Do not let him/her lie down or lean back as this will allow blood to flow down his/her throat and may make him/her vomit.
- Do not try to stuff tissues or other material into the nose to stop the bleeding.
- Firmly pinch the soft part of the child's nose and keep the pressure on for a full 10 minutes. They should not look to see if the nose is bleeding during this time; it may start the flow again.
- If the bleeding has not stopped after 10 minutes, repeat the pressure. If bleeding persists after a second try, call your child's health care provider or take the child to the nearest hospital emergency department.
- While most nosebleeds are benign and self-limited, a child with severe or recurrent bleeding, or bleeding from both nostrils, should be evaluated by a health care provider.