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Nose Bleeds

Definition

Nosebleeds (epistaxes) are very common throughout childhood. They are usually caused by dryness of the nasal lining plus the normal rubbing and picking that all children do when the nose becomes blocked or itchy. Vigorous nose blowing can also cause bleeding. All of these behaviors are increased in children with nasal allergies.

Home Care

Lean Forward and Spit Out Any Blood. Have your child sit up and lean forward so she does not have to swallow the blood. Have a basin available so she can spit out any blood that drains into her throat. Blow her nose free of any large clots that might interfere with applying pressure.

Squeeze the Soft Part of the Nose. Tightly pinch the soft parts of the nose against the center wall for 15 minutes. Don't release the pressure until 15 minutes are up. If the bleeding continues, you may not be pressing on the right spot. During this time your child will have to breathe through her mouth.

If Bleeding Continues, Use Vasoconstrictor Nose Drops and Squeeze Again. If the nosebleed hasn't stopped, insert a piece of gauze covered with vasoconstrictor nose drops (e.g., Neo-Synephrine) or vaseline jelly into the nostril. Squeeze again for 10 minutes more. Leave the gauze in for another 10 minutes before removing it. If bleeding persists, call our office but continue the pressure in the meantime. Swallowed blood is irritating to the stomach. Don't be surprised if it is vomited up.

Common Mistakes in Treating Nosebleeds

ÊA cold washcloth applied to the forehead, back of the neck, bridge of the nose, or under the upper lip does not help to stop a nosebleed.

ÊPressing on the bony part of the nose does not stop a nosebleed.

ÊAvoid packing the nose with anything, because when the packing is removed, bleeding usually recurs.

Prevention

1. A small amount of petroleum jelly applied twice each day to the center wall (septum) inside the nose is often helpful for relieving dryness and irritation.
2. Increasing the humidity in the room at night by using a humidifier or warm vaporizer may also be helpful.
3. If your child has nasal allergies, treating them with antihistamines will help break the itching-scratching-bleeding cycle.

Call our office if:

- »The bleeding does not stop after 20 minutes of direct pressure.
- »Nosebleeds occur frequently, even after vaseline jelly and humidification are used.