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NOSE BLEEDS

Nosebleeds, known medically as epistaxis, are one of the most common problems seen by doctors. The bleeding usually comes from a network of three small arteries near the front of the septum, or middle partition, of the nose. It is most often caused by drying of the tissues or by local injury - especially picking at crusts. Bleeding can also be brought on by conditions that cause the blood vessels to enlarge such as colds or flu, nasal allergies and vigorous exertion. Medical conditions such as high blood pressure or use of blood thinners (including aspirin) will sometimes start up bleeding, and will certainly make it more difficult to stop. A history of coronary artery disease coupled with thinning of the mucosal lining of the nose with aging can lead to superficial fragile arteries near the surface that break and bleed easily. Drying of the mucosal lining of the nose or a deviated septum can worsen this. While often frightening, nosebleeds can usually be easily controlled with the following method.

- 1) Remain calm
- 2) Pinch your nose tightly just below the bones of the bridge of your nose and hold for at least 10 to 15 minutes by the clock. Do not stop pinching your nose for any reason during this time (e.g., to check to see if the bleeding has stopped, drink water, etc.). Sit up with your face looking slightly down so that the blood does not run down your throat. Apply an ice pack to the bridge of the nose. You may also try holding ice chips in your mouth. Cold will shrink the blood vessels.
- 3) If the bleeding is heavy or does not stop immediately, gently blow out the clots and then place Afrin, Neo-Synephrine or other over-the-counter decongestant nose drops or spray into the nostrils. These over-the-counter sprays constrict blood vessels and will assist in stopping the bleeding. Then, hold pressure to the nose again as outlined above. Saline (salt water) drops will not help stop bleeding, but they can be used to keep the nasal tissues moist in dry weather to prevent bleeding.
- 4) Avoid hot drinks or hot foods, alcohol and hot baths or showers for two days.
- 5) Do not take anything with aspirin (Bayer, Excedrin, etc.) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil). These will make you bleed more. It is ok to take acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- 6) Avoid heavy lifting, straining (including constipation) or bending forward because these cause blood to go to your head and may elevate your blood pressure.
- 7) Sleep with 2 extra pillows.
- 8) Do not pick at any scabs. Ever.
- 9) Sneeze with your mouth wide open.
- 10) If you have a history of high blood pressure, please see your primary care physician to verify that it is properly controlled.

Notify your doctor or nearest emergency room - especially if the bleeding is severe or recurrent.

Post-Cautery Instructions

1. One spray of Afrin twice daily for 3 days and as needed for bleeding
2. No hot showers or hot drinks for 3 days. Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 3 days.
3. Limit nose blowing. Do not pick at the scabs

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