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Taking Care of Nosebleeds: For People Taking Blood Thinners

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Information based on recommendations from Michigan Medicine Department of Otolaryngology physicians.

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MAQI² (Michigan Anticoagulation Quality Improvement Initiative)
Taking Care of a Nosebleed: For People on Blood Thinners

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Results

Page 1 (of 1): Showing records 1 - 1 (of 1)

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	Taking Care of a Nosebleed For people taking blood thinners - Video	More Details...
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Page 1 (of 1): Showing records 1 - 1 (of 1)

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How can I prevent nosebleeds?

Preventative care is the most important step when it comes to managing nosebleeds. You can buy products used to treat and prevent nosebleeds at your local pharmacy.

It is important to keep your nose moist during the dry months of winter. Some ways to keep your nose moist include:



- Use an over-the-counter nasal saline spray every 2-3 hours while awake.



- Use a cool-mist humidifier to humidify your room at night while you sleep.



- Coat the inside of your nostril with petroleum jelly twice a day, especially at night. You can also place a cotton ball coated in petroleum jelly in the affected nostril overnight.

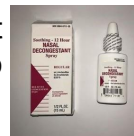
What can I do when I have a nosebleed?

Nosebleeds can happen at any time, particularly during the cold, dry months of winter. While they can be a nuisance, they are rarely an emergency. Over-the-counter nasal decongestant spray is very effective at stopping nose bleeds, so it is a good idea to keep a bottle on hand. When you have a nosebleed:

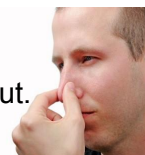
1. Remain calm.
2. Sit or stand up and lean forward. If there is blood in your mouth, spit it out. Do not swallow it.



3. Apply three sprays of decongestant nose spray (oxymetazoline hcl) into the side that is bleeding.



4. Pinch the soft part of your nose shut.



5. Pinch your nose for 10 minutes. Use a clock to keep track of time. **Resist the urge to peek** after a few minutes to see if your nose has stopped bleeding.
6. After 10 minutes, let go of your nose. If it is still bleeding, soak a cotton ball with the nose spray. Place the cotton ball into the bleeding nostril and pinch for 10 minutes. Again, use a clock to time it.
7. Once bleeding has stopped, for two days do not: blow your nose, lift anything heavy or do heavy housework.
8. Check your blood pressure, if possible. High blood pressure can cause nosebleeds.

Can I keep using steroid nasal sprays?

If you use steroid nasal sprays, call your doctor and ask if you need to continue them. Steroid sprays can dry out your nose and increase your risk for more nosebleeds. **Remember: Nasal saline spray and petroleum jelly are the best tools for preventing nosebleeds.**

When should I call my anticoagulation provider?

It is important to contact your anticoagulation provider about your nosebleed. They may want to do a blood test to find out if there have been any other changes in your health. Let your anticoagulation provider know if you have more than 3-4 nosebleeds a week or 6 in a month despite following these tips. If you continue to have nosebleeds, you may need an evaluation by an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist.

When should I go to the emergency room?

Nosebleeds are a nuisance but rarely an emergency. There are some situations when nosebleeds require **immediate medical attention**:

- Bleeding that does not stop in 30 minutes.
- Bleeding that is very heavy, pouring down the back of your throat and out the front of your nose.
- Bleeding with other symptoms like:
 - very high blood pressure
 - light headedness
 - chest pain
 - rapid heart rate that may require treatment

Remember: Nosebleeds are common in patients using blood thinners and can be scary the first time they happen. Nosebleeds are rarely dangerous and can be easily managed at home if you know what to do and when to seek help.