

Is a nosebleed a warning sign?

While most nosebleeds are harmless, they may be a sign of something more serious. In some cases, nosebleeds can be a sign of high blood pressure. In patients taking warfarin (Coumadin), nosebleeds can be a sign that your blood is too thin.

In order to reduce the risk of bleeding, contact your doctor or your pharmacist in the following situations:

1. When you start taking a new prescription, an over-the-counter medicine, or any herbal supplement.
2. When you experience cold or flu symptoms, or any changes in your health.
3. When you make any changes in your diet.
4. When you drink more alcohol.
5. If you mistakenly take an extra dose of warfarin.
6. When you experience additional bleeding from areas other than the nose, such as in the urine or stool.
7. When you have excessive bruising.

Management of nosebleeds for patients taking antithrombotic agents



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The nose is enriched with many small blood vessels. Nosebleeds occur when one of these vessels breaks. They most commonly occur in the morning, in the winter months, in dry and cold climates.

Nosebleeds are relatively common and the probability increases for patients taking warfarin (Coumadin®), apixaban (Eliquis®), dabigatran (Pradaxa®), rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), clopidogrel (Plavix®), ticagrelor (Brilinta®), prasugrel (Effient®), or aspirin because of the effect of these medications on the ability of the blood to clot. In most cases, nosebleeds can be treated at home.

Common causes of nosebleeds

1. Exposure to dry, warm or cold air.
2. Excessive nose-blowing from a cold or allergies.
3. Injury to the nose, or near the nose.
4. High blood pressure.

Types of nosebleeds

There are two types of nosebleeds:

1. **Anterior nosebleeds:** These are the most common type and start in the front part of the nose. Blood usually drips out of the nostrils and rarely drips down the back of the nose and into the throat. This type is usually easily controlled.
2. **Posterior nosebleeds:** These are less common, but can be more severe, occurring mainly in elderly people. They start in the blood vessels in the back of the nose and blood usually run down into the throat. They can be harder to stop, and may cause choking if there is a lot of blood. These nosebleeds are more complicated and usually require admission to the hospital.

Follow these steps to treat a nosebleed:

1. Remain calm.
2. Sit or stand upright and lean slightly forward. This will prevent blood from going down the back of your throat.
3. Keep your mouth open so that the blood or clots will not obstruct your airway and help avoid choking
4. Squeeze both sides of the nose together at the bridge, below the bone, for about 15 minutes. Breathe through your mouth apply pressure for 5 to 10 minutes and if bleeding has not stopped after pinching the nose for 10 minutes, apply pressure again for 5 more minutes{.
5. If the nosebleed has not stopped after 15 minutes, apply an ice pack to the bridge of the nose, upper lip, or back of the neck. This may help to constrict the blood vessels and reduce the bleeding. Do not plug or block nostrils.
6. If the nosebleed has not stopped in 30 minutes, go immediately to the nearest emergency department.

