



# Preventing and Treating Nosebleeds

*For patients taking warfarin*

**This handout explains why nosebleeds occur, the different types of nosebleeds, prevention tips, and treatments.**

The nose is lined with many small blood vessels. Nosebleeds occur when one of these vessels breaks.

Nosebleeds are common, especially in patients taking warfarin (Coumadin) because of the medicine's effect on the ability of the blood to clot. In many cases, nosebleeds can be treated at home.

## Common Causes of Nosebleeds

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

## Types of Nosebleeds

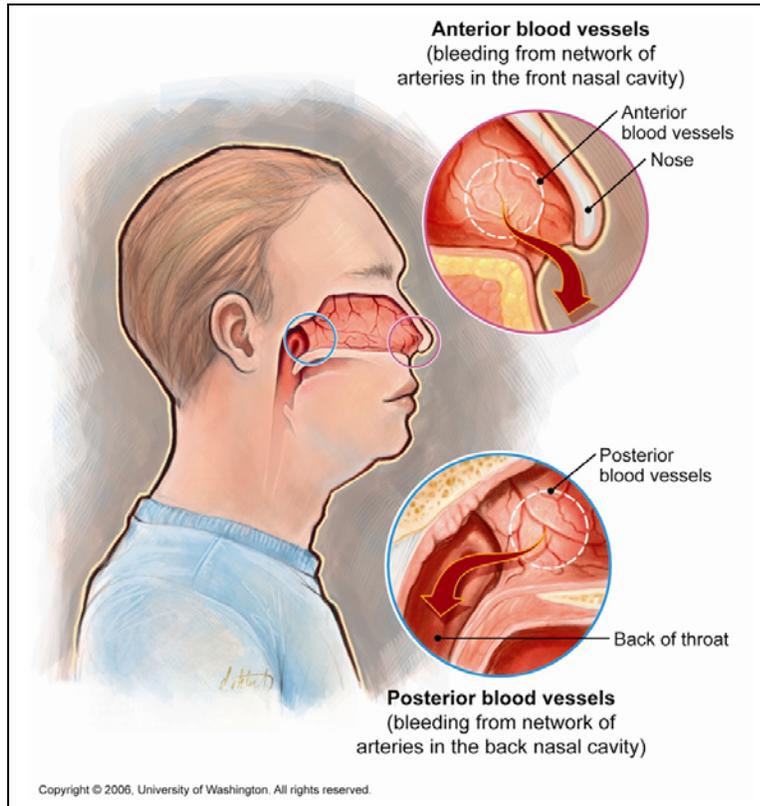
There are two types of nosebleeds:

- **Anterior nosebleeds** are the most common and start in the front part of the nose. Blood usually drips out of the nostrils. At times, it can drip down the back of the nose and into the throat.
- **Posterior nosebleeds** are less common, but can be more severe. They start in the blood vessels in the back of the nose and blood usually runs down into the throat. Posterior nosebleeds can be harder to stop, and may cause choking if there is a lot of blood.

## To Prevent Nosebleeds

Follow these tips to prevent nosebleeds:

- Keep your nasal passages moist with petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or saline nasal spray (Ocean). Use either product 2 to 4 times a day.
- Do not smoke.
- Open your mouth when you sneeze.
- Avoid bending, straining, or lifting.
- Avoid hot showers.
- Use a humidifier.



Anterior and posterior nosebleeds.

## Follow These Steps to Treat a Nosebleed

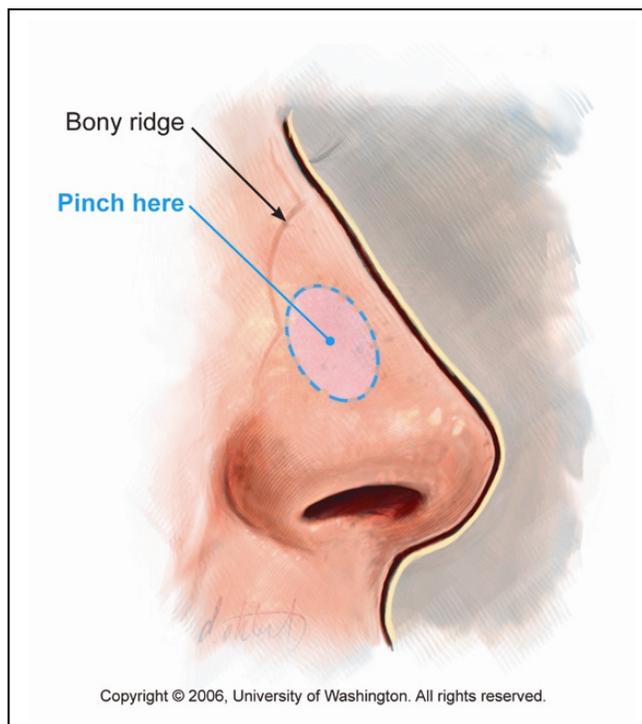
1. Remain calm.
2. Sit or stand upright and lean slightly forward. This will prevent blood from going down the back of your throat.
3. Pinch the nose with your thumb and index finger, just below the bony ridge of the nose. Breathe through your mouth.
4. Apply pressure for 5 to 10 minutes.
5. If bleeding has not stopped after pinching the nose for 10 minutes, apply pressure again for 5 more minutes.
6. 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.
7. If the nosebleed has not stopped in 30 minutes, **seek medical attention.**

## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

### Anticoagulation Clinics:

- University of Washington Medical Center:  
206-598-4874
- Seattle Cancer Care Alliance:  
206-288-6756
- Harborview Medical Center:  
206-744-2976



Pinch the nose using gentle pressure with the thumb and index finger, just below the bony ridge.

## 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.

To lower the risk of bleeding, contact the Anticoagulation Clinic if you:

- Start taking a new prescription, over-the-counter medicine, or herbal supplement.
- Experience cold or flu symptoms, or any change in health.
- Make changes in your diet.
- Drink alcohol in excess.
- Take an extra dose of warfarin.

Have any bleeding or excessive bruising.

**UW Medicine**  
HEALTH SYSTEM



### UWMC Anticoagulation Clinic

Box 356015  
1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195  
206-598-4874

*Seattle Cancer Care Alliance is a collaboration of Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, UW Medicine, and Seattle Children's*

© University of Washington Medical Center  
Published: 04/2006, 01/2010  
Clinician Review: 07/2011

Reprints on Health Online: <http://healthonline.washington.edu>