How to treat bloody noses- nothing to sneeze at

Our fantastic Two Peds in a Pod photographer Lexi Logan recently put in a request for a post on bloody noses. I cringed, thinking any photo would not be pretty. “No problem,” she replied,” I’m thinking just a tissue and a top-of-nose shot… pinch angle.”

I was aghast. “Looks like you fell for the number one myth associated with bloody noses,” I said.”That’s the wrong spot to pinch.”

“See,” she told me,”that’s why I need the post.”

So, how does one squelch the fountain of red which spews from a bloody nose? Apply pressure to the SIDE of the nostrils—not up near the bridge of the nose. More blood vessels lay near the bottom of the septum, the divider which separates the nostrils, than near the top. Pinch the nose firmly. Since kids never seem to apply enough pressure on their own, go ahead and pinch for them. You’ll find it easier to pinch both nostrils simultaneously even if the blood is dripping from only one side.

Now hold. Hold. Hold. Hold in the middle of the night until you nearly fall back to sleep. Hold until the pot of spaghetti boils over. Hold for at least ten minutes before peeking in order to allow the blood to clot. If the nose is still oozing, pinch for another ten minutes. Have your kid sit up straight or lean slightly forward. Otherwise, blood will drip down the back of her throat and cause nausea and vomiting.

Do not be surprised after an episode if the next couple of nights bring more bloody noses. At night during sleep kids tend to rub their noses. Any scab that formed from a recent nose bleed gets sloughed off.

To prevent reoccurrence, protect those fragile blood vessels by keeping the inside walls of the nose moist. Once or twice a day, spritz saline into the nose, then apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly. Try running a cool mist humidifier in your child's bedroom.

Prevent nasal irritation by decreasing environmental irritations such as cigarette smoke or dust. Teach your child to dab at his nose or blow gently when he has a cold. Ironically, some steroid nasal sprays, which treat runny noses caused by allergies, can irritate nasal passages.

Your kid is having too many bloody noses when you start to carry around tissues or your child sleeps with a box of tissues next to his pillow "just in case." Go to your child's doctor if this occurs. Also, go if there are signs of a clotting problem such as easy bruising, bleeding gums, or heavy periods. Likewise, if bloody noses take more than twenty minutes to clot, or if the nose bleed requires an emergency room visit or packing in the nose, make an appointment. Other reasons for more evaluation include if your family has a history of clotting disorders, your child gets speckled flat rashes that look like broken blood vessels (petechiae) which do not blanch (lose color for a second when you press on it) or if a nosebleed is caused by trauma.

Your child's doctor may recommend sealing vessels with cauterization or investigating for possible blood clotting problems. Depending on your child's age, she may also recommend a short course of oxymetazoline (eg Afrin). Be sure to use oxymetaxzoline according to directions- overuse can cause rebound symptoms.

Ultimately, you may find that your kid's bloody noses are just the result of the perfect storm: dry air and a kid who picks his nose. In the meantime save that thirty percent-off Kohl's coupon. You might be buying a lot of pillow cases.

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