

Patient FAQs for Nasal Packing

1. How long will the packing stay in?

- Your packing will remain in place for a time agreed upon with your clinician but typically should be in place for no longer than 5 days. The duration may depend on factors related to the severity and location of the nosebleed, certain underlying medical conditions, and your comfort. If your packing is resorbable, it may not need removal and will go away with time and the use of nasal saline sprays.

2. Will I be uncomfortable with packing?

- Nasal packing takes up space in your nose and decreases airflow. It can also block your sinuses from draining and obstruct the flow of your tears into the nose. You may experience symptoms similar to a cold while the packing is in place, including nasal obstruction, decreased ability to smell, facial pressure, headaches, nasal drainage, and tearing from the eyes.

3. Can I still have a nosebleed with the packing in?

- Yes, if pressure from the packing is not able to reach the area of bleeding in the nose, bleeding can occur. If this happens, apply pressure to the nose with pinching of the soft area, call your clinician, or go to the emergency department for further management.

4. Shouldn't we leave the packing in longer?

- With nonresorbable packing, duration of use past the time recommended by your clinician can result in possible complications. Therefore, strict adherence to follow-up directions are important.

5. What complications can result from packing?

- Packing is a foreign material that can support the growth of bacteria in the nose. There is a low risk of infection spreading to the nose and sinuses or, in extremely rare cases, throughout the body. The packing also provides pressure inside the nose. This may decrease blood flow to areas of the nose and result in injury. Septal perforations (hole in the partition dividing the right and left nasal cavity) and scar bands in the nasal cavity can develop after removal of the packing. If the packing is secured with clips at the nasal opening, pressure sores of the external skin can develop over time and result in external scarring. Packing obstructs airflow and can interrupt sleep at night, temporarily contributing to or worsening obstructive sleep apnea.

6. How can I reduce the chance of complications associated with packing?

- In some cases, oral antibiotics will be used if the risk for infection is high. Antibiotics, while generally safe, do have some risks, including allergic reactions and gastrointestinal problems. A discussion with your clinician regarding the risks and benefits is appropriate. Keeping the nose and packing moist with nasal saline (salt water) sprays throughout the day can reduce crusting and help resorbable packing melt away. Strict adherence to follow-up instructions will allow for appropriate removal of packing when necessary and should make complications less frequent.

7. What type of restrictions should I follow?

- To avoid increased blood flow to the nose and risk of further bleeding, you should avoid straining, lifting over 10 pounds, bending over, and exercising. Sleeping with the head slightly elevated may also help. Walking and other nonstrenuous activity is permitted. Unless otherwise instructed by your clinician, avoid over-the-counter pain medications that may increase bleeding including aspirin and ibuprofen. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) does not increase bleeding and can be used. In general, you should not try to blow your nose if you have packing in place. If you feel the need to sneeze, sneeze with mouth open.

8. What types of symptoms should I be concerned with?

- You should call your clinician with any of the following: return of blood from nose or mouth, fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit, increasing pain, vision changes, shortness of breath or labored breathing, loss of color around the skin of the nose, swelling of the face, or a diffuse skin rash.

9. Who will remove the packing and where will this happen?

- You should discuss this with your clinician at the time when the pack is placed.

10. What happens after the packing is removed?

- You may initially experience a small amount of bleeding from the raw surfaces inside your nose. Keeping the nose humid with saline spray and moisturizing agents will prevent dry crusts and facilitate healing. In some cases, nosebleeds may recur and an additional treatment may be needed. If this happens, apply pressure to the nose with pinching of the soft area and consider the use of a vasoconstrictor spray. If bleeding continues, call your medical provider, or go to the emergency department for further management.