Dear Alice,

I just came here this fall. Since then, my nose has been bleeding occasionally without any injury. My friend told me it was because of the dry air of U.S. Is he right? How can I prevent this situation? I also have a problem when I brush my teeth. My gums are always bleeding and not just a little!! What should I do? Thanks.

? Bloody face

Answer

Dear Bloody face,

Nosebleeds occur due to a loss of blood from the mucous membranes that line the nose, most often from inside one nostril only. Nosebleeds are most common in childhood, infrequent in healthy young adults, and become more common and serious in old age. The most common causes of nosebleeds are a blow to the nose, fragile blood vessels, or dislodged crusts that form in the mucous membrane as a result of a cold or infection.

The dry heat could definitely cause a strain on the blood vessels in your nose. If you think the dry air could be the culprit, you can put a humidifier in your room or apartment. A similar (but less expensive) option is to put pans of water on top of your radiators. The heat causes the water to evaporate, which adds moisture to the air. Then you can refill the pans as necessary.

Most nosebleeds can be controlled by simple first aid measures. This sequence of steps can help you control the bleeding (safely):

1. Sit in a chair, and lean forward slightly with your mouth held open so that blood or clots do not obstruct the airway.
2. Pinch the lower part of your nostrils for about 15 minutes, and continue to breathe through your mouth.
3. After 15 minutes is up, release your nostrils slowly. Avoid touching or blowing your nose.

Although rare, recurrent nosebleeds are a sign of an underlying disorder, such as hypertension (high blood pressure), a bleeding disorder, or a tumor of the nose or sinuses. If your nosebleeds are happening consistently, it is recommended to see your health care
provider.

Bleeding gums are usually a symptom of gingivitis—an early, reversible stage of gum disease, characterized by inflammation of the gums. Gingivitis occurs if plaque (chock-full of bacteria) is allowed to collect around the base of the teeth. Untreated gingivitis may lead to periodontitis, the advanced stage of gum disease, in which pockets form between the gums and the teeth. Very rarely, bleeding gums are due to leukemia (blood cell cancer) or scurvy (vitamin C deficiency). If your gums continue to bleed, it is highly recommended that you have a good cleaning at the dentist and ingest extra vitamin C.

Keep taking note of those leaky faucets! Paying attention to your health is key to finding the solution that works best for you.

Alice!

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Published date:
Dec 01, 1994
Last reviewed on:
Nov 13, 2014

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