Education

Nose Injury

What is a nose injury?

A nose injury is usually caused by direct hit to the nose causing a:

- nosebleed
- bruised nose (contusion)
- broken nose (fracture)
- damaged nasal septum (the nasal septum is the tissue that separates the nasal passages).

How does it occur?

A nose injury is often caused by a motor vehicle accident, assault, or from playing sports.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- pain
- bleeding
- swelling
- sometimes deformity or crookedness
- difficulty breathing through the nose
- grating or grinding noise with movement of broken nose bones.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will examine your nose. He or she will look for swelling, tenderness, bleeding, and movement of bones. Your provider will look in your nostrils to see if the septum is swollen or bent to the side (deviated).

You may have:

- an x-ray to see if the nose is broken
- a CT scan to look at the nasal septum and the sinuses.

How is it treated?

If your nose is bleeding:

- Pinch your nostrils firmly together just below the nasal bones for 10 minutes or until the bleeding stops.
- It may help to put ice on your nose.

- Sit up and lean forward.
- Breathe through your mouth.

If the bleeding doesn't stop with pressure, your health care provider may need to put gauze packing in your nose to stop the bleeding.

After the nosebleed stops, try not to blow your nose because the bleeding may start again. Avoid taking aspirin or other anti-inflammatory medicines because they may make bleeding worse. Take acetaminophen instead.

Many broken noses heal normally with no special treatment. If you have broken your nose and it is crooked:

- Your health care provider may straighten it right after the injury.
- You may be sent to a specialist to have it straightened.
- You may need surgery.

If the septum has become deviated and you have trouble breathing, you may need to have surgery in the future.

How long will the effects last?

The pain from a contusion will be gone within a few days to a few weeks. The pain from a broken nose will take several weeks or more to go away.

How can I take care of myself?

- Do not start any activities until the nosebleed has completely stopped.
- If you have broken your nose and you play a contact sport, wear a special nose and face shield for 4 to 6 weeks after the injury. Shields may be purchased at a sporting goods store or may be custom-made for you.

How can I prevent a nose injury?

Nose injuries are usually caused by an accident that cannot be prevented. If you play a sport for which preventive face gear is available, such as hockey or lacrosse, make sure you wear the shield.