

Epistaxis

Epistaxis is a clinical term which simply means nose bleeds. This may be from one or both nostrils and can originate anywhere in the respiratory system – from the nose and sinuses to the lungs.



Causes

Various causes of bleeding exist with differing degrees of importance.

1. Head trauma is the most common cause, and may have an associated sinus fracture.
2. Exercise induced pulmonary haemorrhage (EIPH) is commonly found in horses exercising intensively (racehorses, intermediate/advanced eventers and some dressage horses) where small blood vessel rupture occurs in the lungs.
3. Foreign bodies (often twigs) can sometimes induce spontaneous bleeds.
4. Occasionally, infections (sinusitis) will damage blood vessels but more usually cause both blood and pus to run down the nostrils.
5. Less often, tumours and growths can occur causing recurrent bleeds e.g. ethmoid haematoma.
6. A fungal infection, guttural pouch mycosis (GPM) is the most serious cause, potentially causing a life-threatening bleed within a relatively short period (24 to 72 hours.) This is uncommon in the United Kingdom.
7. Trauma to the lining of the nasal cavity due to passage of a stomach tube for the treatment or investigation of choke or colic.

KEY POINTS:

- bleeding from the nose can start from many places in the respiratory tract;
- most causes are not life threatening;
- diagnosis may require a number of tests;
- treatment may not be necessary and will depend on the cause of the bleeding.



A FRACTURE OF THE SINUS BONE (ARROW) FOLLOWING HEAD TRAUMA WHICH PRESENTED WITH EPISTAXIS

Treatment

- often not required;
- will depend on the underlying cause of the bleeding;
- may occasionally not be possible.

Most cases of epistaxis are a 'one-off' and probably due to minor damage inside the nose, like a human nose bleed. However, if there is a large amount of blood produced or if bleeding recurs, you should seek advice from your vet.



EXERCISE INDUCED PULMONARY HAEMORRHAGE CAN PRESENT AS BLEEDING FROM THE NOSTRILS FOLLOWING INTENSE EXERCISE



Investigation:

- examination by your vet;
- x-rays of the head to look for sinusitis, fractures and growths;
- endoscopy of the nose, throat, sinuses, guttural pouches and windpipe using a long, slim, flexible camera;
- rarely MRI and CT can be used.



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