Most children will encounter one eventually—whether it’s from a blow to the face on the soccer field, a fall from a bike or seemingly no reason at all. Nosebleeds cause almost as much trauma for parents, who have to act quickly to stop both the tears and the blood flow.

What’s the best way to manage a nosebleed? And how do you know if it’s routine—or a red flag? If your child has frequent nosebleeds or seems to get bruises more than his or her siblings or friends, you may start wondering if a bleeding disorder is involved. Here’s what you need to know.

Why nosebleeds happen
In addition to simple childhood accidents, nosebleeds can be triggered by a variety of things. The most common causes of nosebleeds in children are nose picking or irritation from colds or allergies. Dryness can also be a culprit. Using a humidifier, saline sprays or a bacterial ointment on the nostrils at night may help combat the problem.

Children are especially prone to nosebleeds because the blood vessels in their nose are close to the skin’s surface. As they reach puberty, their faces grow and the blood vessels burrow deeper beneath the surface.

What to do
Most nosebleeds are brief and easy to control. Follow these steps:

- **Have your child sit calmly with his or her head forward.** Do not put the head back, as this allows blood to go down the throat and can cause problems with breathing or lead to nausea and vomiting.
- **Pinch the nose tightly for at least five minutes,** just below where the bony portion of the nose ends. Don’t check to see if the bleeding has stopped during this time.
- **Repeat the process if necessary** for a longer period if the bleeding has not stopped after five minutes. Do not put tissue or cotton in the nose, as this may irritate the lining of the nose and increase the bleeding.
- **Go to the emergency room** if the bleeding continues for more than 15 minutes and shows no signs of slowing down.

Once the bleeding has stopped, do not allow your child to blow his or her nose to try to remove the clot, because this may cause the bleeding to resume.

When to see a doctor
If your child has nosebleeds often or seems to bruise easily, it’s natural to worry. But in most cases, children with frequent nosebleeds (defined as occurring once a month) have no underlying medical issue. See a doctor for further evaluation when:

- Your child has frequent nosebleeds that require a visit to the ER.
- Blood loss has resulted in iron deficiency or need for a transfusion.
- Your child develops tiny red spots on the skin.
- There is a family history of bleeding disorders.

About bleeding disorders
Only 1 in 5 children with frequent nosebleeds will be diagnosed with a bleeding disorder. In addition to nosebleeds and increased bruising, disorders of the blood vessels, platelets or clotting system can result in heavy periods and bleeding more than expected with cuts or surgery. Sometimes bleeding disorders are discovered early in life—during the first or second year when a child begins to walk and is prone to accidents. Unusual bleeding with the eruption of the primary or secondary teeth can also signal a problem.

Many bleeding disorders have a genetic basis, so knowing your family history is important. If you have any concerns, talk to your primary care doctor or pediatrician about obtaining some screening tests. It’s better to be safe than sorry.