



For Hearing Sake,

BLOW YOUR NOSE!

Learning to blow your nose is a vital skill for young children to learn, particularly to protect their ears. Ear infections often start with a blockage of the Eustachian tube. This is a tube that runs from the back of the nose to the middle ear space. This Eustachian Tube helps us to equalise pressure and drain the space behind the ear drum of any fluid.

When a child does not blow their nose, nasal congestion can block the Eustachian Tube. This can increase the possibility of ear infections and temporary hearing loss. A blocked nose can be associated with 'blocked ears', this can make it difficult for your child to speak and hear clearly.

Blowing your nose can help to temporarily unblock the ears, instantaneously improving hearing and communication. When your child can learn to blow their nose, this reduces the risk of ear and hearing problems.

However, we all know that trying to get a toddler to blow their nose is not always an easy task. A child should be starting to blow their own nose at about 2.5 years of age. However, if your child is over the age of 3 and cannot blow their nose, this may be a sign that there is a problem that may require intervention. Most commonly, this is enlarged adenoids or build-up of mucus. Signs of this include loud snoring when they are asleep or the inability to breathe through their nose. This should be medically investigated by your doctor as soon as possible.

TEACHING YOUR CHILD TO BLOW THEIR NOSE

Here are some helpful tips to encourage your child to start blowing their nose on their own:

1. Start by teaching your child how to blow using their mouth first – try this during playtime blowing something light like a cotton wool ball or leaves.
2. Once a child can blow with their mouth, you can move onto them using their nose – try covering your mouth and showing your child that these light items above can be moved using air from your nose. Encourage them to blow the items with their nose.
3. Encourage your child to be aware of when their nose is blocked. Using a mirror can be helpful to show them when their nose is running.
4. To support your child to breathe through their nose when their mouth is closed, try taking turns humming a tune. Show your child how to breathe through the nose first and then out whilst humming.
5. Allow your child to practice holding the tissue over their nose with both hands.
6. Encourage your child to blow out through their nose with more force, but not too much force that it hurts the nose and ears. Getting the pressure just right is a skill and takes practice.
7. Young children may fear that it will be painful or uncomfortable as they have often experienced forceful wiping before when they have been grubby and dirty. Ensure your child is wiping their face softly to collect all mucus in the tissue.
8. Remind your child that they need to check that their nose is clear after blowing once. The easiest way to do this is to blow again with some force while listening for any obstruction. Teach your child that it may take several blows to clear the nose completely.
9. Encourage your child to blow their nose 5-6 times per day, particularly in winter!
10. At 5 years of age, it should be possible to blow through one nostril at a time. Remind your child of this until it becomes habitual for them.
11. Use a tissue and not a handkerchief as it can be thrown in the bin when finished to reduce the risk of infection.
12. Lastly, be patient, this is not an easy task but the rewards outweigh the effort!