

Picking Your Nose

Nose picking is the act of digging boogers from your nose. Sesquipedalians (persons given to using long words) call people who pick their noses, *rhinotillexomaniacs*: from the Greek, *rhis*, *rhinos* ‘the nose’ + *tillexis* ‘the habit of picking’ + *mania* ‘obsession with something.’

No one knows who the first person to pick his nose was. That’s because it happened before people could write. Popular accounts say that the first record of nose picking appeared about 1330 BC in ancient Egypt. Apparently, an archaeologist by the name of Dr. Wilbur Leakey found a papyrus scroll that detailed the financial payment of three heads of cattle, and food and lodging to Tutankhamun's personal nose picker.ⁱ

Here’s how it worked. The membranes in the good Pharaoh’s nose produced wet mucous. As he breathed in-and-out through his nose, the mucous dried and became crusty. That crusty mucous irritated Tutankhamun’s nose and the rest is history. Except for the fact that most people pick their own noses these days, not much has changed in the last 3,000 or so years.

Just to prove it, in 1995, The Journal of Psychiatry published the results of a nose picking study in which the 1,000 residents of Dane County, Wisconsin were surveyed.ⁱⁱ Here’s what the 254 people who responded had to say:

- Over 90% confessed they picked their nose.
- Almost 10% claimed they have never picked their nose. (We suspect these people are liars or suffer from memory loss.)
- About 25% admitted they pick their noses every day.
- Three people said they pick every hour of every day.
- One person claimed to pick over 2 hours each day.
- About 10% ate their boogers.

Not to be outdone, we compiled our own nose picking conclusions based on years of hands-on unscientific observation. Here’s how we see it:



Everyone picks his or her nose. Why you ask?

- So they can breath.
- To get rid of hanging boogers.
- To scratch an itch.
- To relieve irritation caused by that crusty mucous.
- It's a habit.
- Picking is fun.
- Boogers taste good.

What do they use?

- Index finger.
- Pinky.
- Thumb.
- Other objects, like pencils and Q-tips.

How do they dispose of the boogers?

- Flick them on the floor or wall. (Your success will depend on whether the booger is wet or dry.)
- Wipe them on something (like a tissue) or someone (like a friend).
- Eat them.

Based on the information we have on hand, it seems reasonable to conclude that everybody picks his or her nose at one time or another. It's also a fact that modern etiquette considers nose picking rude and repugnant. So what should you do?

Picking Dos and Don'ts

- Try to pick your nose only when you're alone.
- Use a handkerchief or tissue paper if you must pick in public. Make it quick and discreet.
- Don't pick while seated at the table eating with other people.
- Don't pick if you are handling food and drinks for others.
- Remember that picking does not impress girls—or boys for that matter.

Want more bad habits? <http://www.bigbookpress.com/badhabits.html>

ⁱ Jayesh, D.; Medical Trivia; British Medical Journal; March 20, 2004; 328 (7441): 679.

ⁱⁱ Jefferson, J.W., Thompson T.D.; Rhinotillexomania: psychiatric disorder or habit? The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry; 1995; 56:56-9.