

ENDOSCOPIC SINUS SURGERY: POST-OPERATIVE CARE PLAN

After nasal surgery it takes several weeks for nasal function, particularly flow of mucus, to return to normal. This does not mean that you will feel unwell for several weeks, but your full participation is encouraged to achieve the best outcome after your nasal and sinus surgery. Each patient will have a slightly different recovery experience. The following is a guide to help you through this period.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER SURGERY:

- 1. BLEEDING:** It is normal to experience some bleeding during the first night and for a few days after the surgery. You will be given a nasal bolster to help absorb the mild ooze.
If steady bleeding occurs, tilt your head back slightly and breathe gently through your mouth. You may dab your nose gently with a tissue, but please do not blow your nose. Stay calm. You may use a few sprays of nasal decongestant (such as Otrivin or Drixine, available over the counter from your pharmacy) in your nose to help shrink the blood vessels. Sucking on ice will also help ease the bleeding.
If heavy or prolonged bleeding occurs, please contact your surgeon or present to the nearest emergency department.
- 2. PAIN:** Nose and sinus operations are generally not especially painful. However, you may experience some nasal and facial pain or discomfort. This is often controlled adequately with paracetamol and sometimes opiate medication such as Panadeine Forte (paracetamol and codeine) or oxycodone (eg. Endone).
It is best to avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication such as aspirin, and ibuprofen (eg. Nurofen, Advil) for 10 days after surgery to minimize the risk of bleeding.
- 3. NASAL CONGESTION:** Nasal congestion can be significant following nose or sinus surgery, typically lasting up to 10 days. The impact it has on an individual varies from patient to patient. At your initial post-operative appointment, your nose may be suctioned or some medications may be prescribed to help with healing and congestion.
- 4. SALINE SPRAYS AND PHYSIOLOGICAL NASAL RINSES:** Saline nasal sprays can be started after the surgery and used as frequently as necessary to moisten the front part of the nose. Nasal rinses (eg. FLO) can be started from the day after your operation, 3 to 4 times a day initially is recommended.
The aim of the rinses is to help clear clots and mucus crusts that form in the nasal cavity and sinuses after surgery. This assists with healing and minimizes the chance of infection and scarring, so is an important part of the management. If you are using nasal rinses, initially you may not be able to get much volume into your nose. Please do not force the application into your nose. The initial goal is to apply fluid to the front part of your nose so it remains moist. With each application, it will become easier to clear dried blood and mucus from your nose and sinuses.
- 5. ANTIBIOTICS:** You may be prescribed a course of antibiotics (usually 5 to 7 days). If you think you are having side-effects related to the antibiotics, please contact your surgeon. Common side effects include rash, nausea, thrush, and diarrhoea.
- 6. CORTICOSTEROID TABLETS (PREDNISOLONE):** You may be prescribed a short course (3 to 5 days) or a more prolonged (2 week) course with tapering dose, of prednisolone. This is to assist with healing and congestion, and prevent an over-exuberant healing response (particularly in patients with nasal polyps). It is not always necessary.

IN THE FIRST ONE TO TWO WEEKS:

You may feel some tenderness inside your nose due to swelling and congestion. Sometimes there may be tenderness in the front part of the nose due to an incision and a dissolvable stitch that is used, if you had a septoplasty performed at the same time. Some people may find that their front teeth or upper lip may feel unusual, numb or tender, and this usually recovers over a few weeks. This is due to swelling causing irritability in the nerves that pass around the sinuses to the front teeth. You may have symptoms similar to having a cold, such as increased congestion and copious amounts of mucus (secreted from swollen nasal lining / mucosa). To minimize crusting and drying, saline sprays and nasal rinses are helpful.

APPEARANCE OF YOUR NOSE AND FACE: There will usually be no change to the external appearance of your nose after sinus surgery, nor is there usually any bruising or swelling around the eyes. [\(continued overleaf...\)](#)

GENERAL CARE OF YOUR NOSE: Avoid blowing your nose and straining for 1 week after your surgery. Avoid picking your nose. Ensure good ventilation during showers, keep showers short and luke warm to avoid heating up, which can increase risk of bleeding and nasal congestion.

DIET: Initially you may wish to cool foods down to room temperature to avoid nasal congestion and bleeding. Chilli may cause more nasal congestion and bleeding. Otherwise there are no dietary restrictions.

SLEEP DISRUPTION: Sleeping a little elevated can be helpful to reduce congestion. You may find sleep interruption is problematic due to having a blocked nose. In this instance, you may use nasal decongestants (eg. Otrivin or Drixine spray) at night. Use should not exceed 5 days.

RETURN TO USUAL ACTIVITY AND WORK: You may feel tired and run-down for 1 to 2 weeks. Initially, resting and elevating your upper body rather than lying flat is helpful to minimise nasal congestion. Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous exercise regimens, which may precipitate bleeding. You can resume most of your usual activities by the end of one week after surgery, though you may wish to limit strenuous exercise. By 2 weeks after surgery you should be able to continue all usual activities.

SMOKING AND POLLUTION: Please refrain from smoking for 6 weeks after surgery. If your work involves significant exposure to dust, chemicals or smoke, change in work duties can be considered. Alternatively nasal filters can be helpful.

BAD BREATH AND ALTERED SMELL: These may occur during the recovery process and gradually improve as the nasal lining heals. Bad breath is usually due to mouth breathing, particularly during sleep. Altered smell (sometimes an unpleasant smell) is a combination of swollen nasal lining and static mucus, which can be helped by use of saline sprays and nasal rinses.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT: You may have a number of return visits to our office for nose and sinus cleaning depending on the operation you had and to assess the healing and progress and early detection and treatment of potential complications such as blood collection or scarring. Post-operative visits are essential to enable the best outcome of your operation.

AT ANY TIME:

1. Call our office if you experience any of the following:
 - Brisk bleeding from your nose or mouth
 - Severe pain, unresponsive to prescribed analgesics
 - Persistent fever
 - Foul smell
 - Clear watery nasal discharge
 - Any visual changes or swelling of your eye
 - Severe headache or neck stiffness

2. If you need to contact someone after hours, our mobile phone numbers can be found on our answering service, in the White Pages, and on the paperwork provided to you pre-operatively. In an emergency, please dial 000 for an ambulance to your nearest hospital.