

SEPTOPLASTY AND INFERIOR TURBINATE 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 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 RELIEF:** Nasal 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:** Saline nasal sprays can be started after the surgery and used as frequently as necessary to moisten the nose, and helps to break down mucus and relieve congestion.
- 5. ANTIBIOTICS:** These are not routinely prescribed for this surgery. Occasionally they may be prescribed for some patients, due to other considerations, and your surgeon will advise you in this case.

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. 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 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.

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. (continued overleaf...)

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.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT: You will normally have a return visit to our office at 1 to 2 weeks after surgery and further follow up as required until healing is complete.

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
 - 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.