



Department of Surgery

Rhinoplasty, Nasal Fracture Repair, Nasal Valve Repair, Septoplasty Postoperative Care

You or your loved one has just had nasal surgery for improving the nasal airway, repairing a traumatic injury or for enhanced appearance. This guide will help answer questions you may have, and it will provide instructions for how to care for your nose in the postoperative time. Please call the office (454-4368) with questions or concerns.

Immediate Post-op Care

- For the first 48 hours after surgery, please sleep on your back with your head elevated on two pillows. Then, for the remainder of the first week, try to sleep on your back (you don't need to elevate your head after the first two days).
- Use cold packs, light-weight ice bags or a bag of frozen peas on your nose and eyes for 10 minutes every two hours the first day, every four hours the second day and every eight hours the third day. You do not need to wake up from sleep for this step. Cold reduces swelling and bruising, which helps you to heal faster, and also reduces bleeding.

Medications

- **Pain.** A narcotic was prescribed for moderate to severe pain: Take this if needed but do not take more than the prescribed amount or any sooner than the prescribed interval.

Tylenol may be taken for mild pain. Avoid ibuprofen products such as Motrin or Advil for the first 48 hours, but you can use them sparingly for mild to moderate pain after the first two days. Do not take more than two every eight hours.

- **Antibiotic.** Prevention of infection is important in the long-term outcome of your surgery. Take the antibiotic until the entire prescription is complete, usually five days.
- **Nausea.** You may be prescribed something for nausea if needed.

Wound Care

- You may shower normally the day after surgery but avoid saturating any incisions with water. Baby shampoo is a good mild option. Also, avoid soaking the cast over your nose, as this may cause the cast to loosen and fall off prematurely.

- Clean any crusts in the nostrils and on any incisions on the nose using warm water and peroxide (one to one mix) and cotton swabs.
- Begin using saline spray to each nostril the night of surgery or the next morning if you have bleeding or pain the first night. You may gently exhale or inhale after rinsing to help clear any mucus or clots. Do not blow your nose for one week.
- Apply a thin layer of Bacitracin or Polysporin antibiotic ointment to the nostrils and any nasal incisions every six to eight hours for the first week.
- If you have had cartilage grafts taken from your ear, there will be a dressing on that ear: Do not remove this dressing. The doctor will remove it in the office and then will have you apply antibiotic ointment every six to eight hours for one week.
- Do not attempt to remove any nasal packing or the cast from your nose. The doctor will remove the cast in five to seven days when you return to the office. If it should loosen and fall off, it may be left off, but be very careful to avoid contact with the delicate structures of the bridge of the nose for one week.
- Most of the sutures used will dissolve on their own in seven to 10 days, but you may have sutures that will need to be removed on your follow-up visit.

Diet

- Drink lots of water or other liquids for the first week.
- Avoid alcohol for one week, especially if you are taking pain medications.
- Start with a soft, fairly bland diet the first day. After that, you may eat anything you like. Be aware that wide opening of your mouth and chewing may be slightly painful for a few days.

Activity

- You may walk at a leisurely pace any time you like. Lifting weights, strenuous exercise and distance running should be avoided for four days.

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- Do not bend over, strain or lift anything more than 10 pounds in the first week. After the first week, begin exercising at “half speed” and increase your level of exercise gradually from there.
- You may wear glasses, but try to limit the time you keep them on in the first week. Lighter frames are preferred to avoid indenting the swollen nasal tissues.
- Do not drive for 24 hours after surgery. Do not drive until you have been off of all narcotic pain medications for at least 24 hours.

Follow-up Visits

- If you have packing in your nose or ear, it will be removed one to two days after surgery in the office. (You will be given a time before leaving the surgery center.) If there is no packing, you will not need this visit.
- We will have arranged a follow-up visit five to seven days after surgery to check all wounds, remove any sutures and remove the cast. The next visit will be one month after surgery, followed by six- and 12-month visits.
- Photographs will be taken on some of these visits with your permission.

Long-term Expectations

- Nasal congestion can persist for two to four weeks after surgery.
- Swelling and bruising usually are almost all resolved by two weeks, but some swelling may take six weeks to resolve.
- The nose will continue to have subtle changes over the first six months. Some numbness of the nasal tip may be present for several months.
- The nasal skin will be sensitive to sunburn for the first three to six months: Wear sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher and consider a hat as well.