

NASAL SURGERY

What are the benefits of nasal surgery?

Many people suffer from poor nasal breathing due to structural narrowing of the nasal airway passages. Others may simply want to change the appearance or restore symmetry to a deviated nose. Nasal surgery (rhinoplasty) is performed to improve nasal breathing and/or the appearance of the nose.

How is nasal surgery performed?

The surgery is performed under general anesthesia in the operating room. A preoperative assessment will be done by your physician that may include lab work, an EKG, and a chest x-ray. Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen for 7 days prior to surgery unless you are required to take this for medical reasons. Be sure that your doctor is aware if you take any blood thinners such as Plavix, aspirin, or coumadin. ***You may not eat or drink anything after midnight prior to surgery.*** The surgery is performed as day surgery, meaning you will be able to go home on the same day as the procedure. You will need a ride home from the hospital because you will not be able to drive after having general anesthesia.

After you are asleep in the operating room, the surgeon will use incisions on the inside of the nose and possibly connect these with a tiny incision on the undersurface of the septum. The septum is the vertical wall made of cartilage in the middle of the nose that separates it into right and left sides. Next the surgeon will expose the lower cartilages of the nose and the nasal septum internally. Usually the nasal septum is straightened internally and small pieces of the cartilage from the septum are used to strengthen the lower cartilages of the nasal sidewall. If there is significant deformity or deviation of the nasal bones then cuts in the nasal bones are made to restore their alignment. The incisions are closed with sutures. Soft rubber splints may be placed inside the nose to help keep it in a correct position while it heals. An external nasal cast is applied to protect the nose.

What should I expect after surgery?

There will be mild to moderate pain and swelling after surgery. There may be some bruising under the eyes. Nasal congestion and drainage will worsen initially and then improve gradually over 2-3 weeks after surgery. The external nasal swelling will subside 2-4 weeks after surgery. It is normal to have some tenderness in your nose and possibly a headache for the first few days after surgery. You will be given pain medicine as well as antibiotics to prevent a sinus infection. You will also have some oozing of blood-tinged mucus for 2-5 days after surgery. You should use a piece of rolled-up gauze under your nostrils that is held there by tape until the oozing subsides. You may be ready to return to light-duty work in 3-5 days but you must avoid strenuous activity and heavy lifting for 2 weeks.

One day after surgery you should start to use saline (salt water) irrigation. Add one teaspoon of table salt to eight ounces of warm water. Obtain a bulb syringe from a pharmacy and gently irrigate your nose on both sides with the saline. Spray each side 2-3 times over a sink and do this at least 3 times a day for 2 weeks.

You will have a follow-up appointment 3-7 days after surgery. At this time your surgeon may look inside your nose again in the office and remove the splints if necessary.

What are the possible complications?

Nasal surgery is commonly performed in the United States and throughout the world. It is considered to be very safe. As with any surgery, there are some risks to consider. Bleeding may occur during the first two weeks. Other risks include failure to achieve the desired functional or cosmetic results, septal perforation (hole in the septum), nasal crusting, sinus infections, and need for more surgery in the future.

When should I call my surgeon?

Notify your surgeon immediately if you have:

- a large amount of bright red bleeding from your nose
- profuse clear watery drainage
- vision changes
- decreased alertness
- uncontrolled pain
- nausea and vomiting that lasts more than eight hours
- any other concerns

Emergencies will be treated at Las Colinas Medical Center (Southeast corner of MacArthur and Highway 161)