

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR NASAL SURGERY

For Septoplasty, Turbinate Reduction, Nasal Valve Repair, and Rhinoplasty

Please review the general instructions and information below.

I. WHAT TO EXPECT (NORMAL SYMPTOMS) AFTER NASAL SURGERY

1. Nasal Congestion

- It is normal and expected to experience nasal congestion after surgery. This is due to a combination of:
 - Swelling on the soft tissues inside the nose after surgery
 - Splints and/or packing that were placed inside the nose during surgery (and will be removed at your first post-operative visit)
 - Accumulations of blood and mucus in the nose and sinuses, which will improve as you perform nasal saline irrigations

2. Bleeding / Bloody Nasal Drainage

- Bloody drainage from the nose is expected in the first week after all types of nasal surgery
 - “Normal” post-operative bloody drainage is a slow but consistent ooze / trickle from one or both nostrils, which will saturate (soak) a gauze dressing within a few hours
 - A brisk, high-flow bleed should be reported to your doctor by calling (310) 423-1220

3. Crusting

- As the blood and mucus in your nose dries, these will form large crusts inside your nose and nostrils
- Please do not pick the crusts out yourself
 - These crusts can be dissolved over time by use of nasal saline irrigation
 - You may take a Q-tip soaked with peroxide to gently remove any scabs or crusts that form around the nostrils

4. Pain

- Moderate pain is normal and expected after surgery
- For pain control:

- Applying ice packs to the face around the nose (not directly on the nose) can help to reduce pain and swelling in this area. You can ice for 5-10 minutes at a time, every few hours first the first week after surgery
- Your doctor may also recommend a combination of Tylenol and Ibuprofen after surgery, or may send a prescription for stronger pain medications to your pharmacy. Use as directed, and never take pain medications on an empty stomach.

5. Nausea

- Nausea and/or vomiting is common in the first day or two after surgery
 - This is due to the after effects of anesthesia, and should subside within a day or two after surgery
 - There are no specific dietary restrictions after surgery, but it is generally recommended to start with liquids (if you are nauseous) and then slowly advance to a full / regular diet as tolerated in the first few days after surgery

II. SURGICAL DRESSINGS AND WOUND CARE

1. Gauze Dressing Under the Nostrils

- A small gauze dressing will be placed underneath your nostrils to prevent nasal drainage from dripping
 - You can change this gauze dressing as needed whenever it becomes saturated (in the first few days, this may be every few hours)
 - You do not need to replace the dressing if there is no more drainage coming out of the nose
- The nursing staff will provide some supplies so that you can replace these dressing at home, but you may also need to purchase additional supplies (obtained at any pharmacy)
 - We recommend use of 4" x 4" (or similarly sized) gauze dressing and soft medical tape

2. Splints

- Splints are soft silicone internal casts that are sewn in place inside the nose to stabilize the septum after surgery
 - Shaped either like a semicircular flat sheet or a tube
 - Will be removed at your first post-operative visit
- Not all of our surgeons place splints inside the nose after surgery
 - Please confirm with your surgeon whether or not splints will be used
- These splints can make it difficult to breathe through your nose in the first week after surgery

- Please be reassured that this is normal and expected and will improve after the splints are removed

3. Nasal Saline Irrigation

- It is important to rinse the inside of your nose after surgery
 - This provides a moist environment that accelerates healing and washes away blood clots and/or infection that can lead to scarring
- Please perform “sinus irrigation” at least four times a day using the NeilMed Sinus Rinse Kit (purchased over the counter at any pharmacy)
- Important Caveat / Exception: If your surgeon used “splints” inside the nose, these may often block the nostrils and you may not be able to get the saline irrigation deep into the nasal cavity
 - In these cases, please just perform the irrigation in the nostrils to clear out any crusts / dried blood in the nostril openings

4. External Nasal Cast *(only applies to nasal valve repair and rhinoplasty surgery)*

- External nasal casts are only used in Nasal Valve Repair or Rhinoplasty surgery
 - Casts are made of a hard material that will be molded to the outside of your nose
 - Please keep the cast as dry as possible, as excess water exposure can cause the cast to detach early

5. Sutures / Incisions *(only applies to nasal valve repair and rhinoplasty surgery)*

- Non-dissolving Sutures (for external skin incisions)
 - If you have Nasal Valve Repair or Rhinoplasty surgery, there will be an external incision on the bridge of skin between the two nostrils (also known as the columella)
 - Apply Vaseline, Aquaphor, or antibiotic ointment to this incision two to three times a day
 - If non-dissolving (removable) sutures were used on this incision, these will be removed at your first post-operative visit
- Dissolving Sutures (for internal nasal incisions)
 - Dissolving sutures are also often used on the inside (and sometimes on the outside) of the nose
 - These will completely dissolve away in the first few weeks after surgery
 - Please do not pick at or remove these sutures on your own

III. ACTIVITY LIMITATIONS

1. Blowing Your Nose

- Please do not blow your nose hard for 1 month after surgery (very gentle blowing is acceptable after 2 weeks)
 - Blowing your nose may potentially cause:
 - Bleeding
 - Disruption of healing
 - If you had Sinus Surgery performed at the same time, blowing your nose may cause leakage of air that causes the skin to swell around your eye and be extremely uncomfortable
 - If you sneeze, please do so with your mouth open (and of course covered with a tissue, etc.). Do not try to hold it in, as this can cause bleeding. Do not sneeze with your mouth and nose closed, as this can also cause bleeding

2. Light Exercise / Activities

- Light exercise and activities (i.e. walking, small household chores, etc.) are acceptable and encouraged after surgery
 - Getting up and out of bed can help to prevent complications such as blood clot formation in the legs (which can rarely occur after general anesthesia)

3. Heavy Exercise / Activities

- Heavy lifting / strenuous activities should be avoided for the 2 weeks after surgery. These activities include:
 - Lifting anything heavier than 10 pounds
 - Bending over with your head below level of the heart
 - Strenuous exercise that may raise your blood pressure or heart rate (i.e. long runs, sprinting, cycling, swimming, etc.)
- For contact sports and activities (i.e. anything where you may get hit on the nose), please avoid for 4-6 weeks after surgery

4. Elevate the Head of Bed

- For the first night after surgery, please sleep with the head of the bed slightly elevated
 - This helps to reduce swelling / congestion in the nose and reduce bleeding
 - You can elevate the head by using at least 2 or more pillows

5. Flying

- Do not fly for 1 week after surgery, and only after given clearance by your surgeon after your first post-operative appointment

IV. POST-OPERATIVE MEDICATIONS

1. Please resume all your routine medications after surgery
 - Important Exception: Do not restart blood thinning medications such as Plavix or Coumadin (Warfarin), until specifically instructed to do so by your surgeon
 - NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, and Aleve are OK to use after surgery
2. Some patients may be prescribed antibiotics after surgery. Please complete the full course of antibiotics as directed

V. POST-OPERATIVE APPOINTMENTS AND FOLLOW-UP

1. First Post-operative Visit

- The first post-operative visit will be approximately 1 week after surgery. At this visit, the following will occur:
 - Any splints, casts, or removable sutures placed during surgery will be taken out
 - Removal of splints, cast, and/or sutures can be uncomfortable
 - It may be helpful to have someone drive you to the first post-operative appointment, so you can take pain medication prior to your appointment if needed
 - If you had Sinus Surgery, the surgeon will need to perform a post-operative sinus cleaning, also known as a “sinus debridement”
- The first post-operative appointment should have been scheduled for you by our surgery scheduler
 - If you do not have a post-operative appointment, please call (310) 423-1220 to schedule

2. Subsequent Post-operative Visits

- Depending on the type of surgery you had performed, there may be one or more additional post-operative visits after your first post-operative visit
 - These visits are to check that everything is healing appropriately
- If you had Sinus Surgery performed at the same time, additional post-operative “sinus debridements” may be performed at these follow-up visits
 - For the most successful outcomes, it is important that you keep all of your post-operative appointments

VI. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. Is it normal to have a stuffy nose after surgery?

- Yes! The first week or two after surgery, your nose will feel very congested. *For more information, please see Section I.1 above*

2. When can I blow my nose?

- You can blow your nose hard for 1 month after surgery (very gentle blowing is acceptable after 2 weeks)
- *For more information, please see Section III.1 above*

3. How many times do I need to rinse a day?

- At a minimum four times a day (but you may heal faster if you perform more). *For more information, please see Section II.3 above*

4. What can I use if there is a little bleeding?

- If you experience a sudden increase in nasal bleeding after surgery, you can spray Afrin (oxymetazoline, available over the counter) into the affected nostril and then pinch the nostrils and hold pressure for 10 minutes. Applying ice packs to the face and sucking on ice cubes can also help to reduce bleeding. If there is still persistently increased bleeding despite the above, please call the office at (310) 423-1220.

5. When can I shower?

- It is ok to shower immediately after surgery. However, if you have an external cast on the nose, please try to keep the cast as dry as possible. *For more information, please see Section II.4*

6. When can I resume exercise?

- For light activities, OK to resume the day of surgery. For heavy activities, please avoid for 2 weeks. *For more information, please see Section III.2 and III.3 above*

7. When can I resume contact sports i.e soccer, football or basketball?

- You can resume these activities 4-6 weeks after surgery. *For more information, please see Section III.3 above*

8. When do I need to follow-up?

- Your first post-operative appointment should be 1 week after surgery. There may be (depending on the type of surgery) additional follow-up visits after this, to be determined by your surgeon at the first post-operative visit. *For more information, please see Section V.1 and V.2*

9. When can I fly?

- After 1 week. *For more information, please see Section III.5.*