



COMMONWEALTH

FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

Postoperative Instructions for Septoplasty +/- Inferior Turbinate Reduction

Nasal airway obstruction can be alleviated through an operative procedure that straightens the septum and reduces the size of the inferior turbinates. The septum is the internal structure of the nose that divides one nostril from the other and can become crooked or deviated, causing airway obstruction. Inferior turbinates are structures inside the nose that warm and humidify the air. They can become enlarged due to nasal allergies, and therefore impinge upon the airway. There are three sets of turbinates that make up part of the airway, but the inferior turbinates are the ones that are most commonly obstructive.

SWELLING

Every operation, no matter how minor, is accompanied by swelling of the surrounding tissues. The degree of swelling varies from person to person, and with the amount of surgery required.

Staying upright (sitting, standing, walking around) as much as possible is important after you leave the hospital. Avoid bending over or lifting heavy objects for at least one week as it may aggravate swelling or cause bleeding.

Avoid hitting or bumping your nose.

Sleep with the head of the bed elevated for approximately 3-5 days. You may place an additional pillow under your head to accomplish this.

Avoid "sniffing," that is, forcibly attempting to pull air through the nose. This will not relieve the sensation of blockage. As the swelling of tissues decreases, your airway will improve.

Avoid rubbing the nostrils and base of the nose as this may cause infection or bleeding. Use the "moustache" gauze dressing if discharge is excessive. The moustache gauze dressing may have to be changed as often as every thirty minutes. This is not abnormal and will significantly lessen in the next twelve hour period. You will usually have clear plastic tape on your cheeks with the moustache dressing taped over it. Leave the clear tape in place until you do not need the moustache dressing anymore (usually 24-48 hours). This avoids irritating the skin from frequent moustache dressing changes.

NASAL PACKING AND BLEEDING

For the first 24 hours, your nose will be lightly packed to decrease oozing. We will remove the small packing the first postoperative day. Please be aware that during the postoperative time, you may have some minimal bleeding. Often blood stained mucus coming from the nose will be seen, and this is not unusual. Nevertheless, if you should find that you are actively bleeding from either nostril, it is important to contact the office as soon as possible.

PAIN

This is very little actual pain, and what pain you have can be alleviated with the prescribed medication. Please do not take aspirin or any aspirin containing medication.

MEDICATIONS

You will usually be prescribed pain medication, antibiotics, ointment, and nasal saline. Nasal saline can be obtained over the counter. Sealed, pressurized saline spray, such as Simply Saline or Nasamist, is preferred (see below). Any antibiotic ointment, such as bacitracin or polysporin, can be used.



CLEANING THE NOSE

The day after your surgery, much or all of the packing will be removed in our office. After this is done, the saline solution and ointment should be used to clean the nose and keep crusting to a minimum. The saline solution should be used every few hours during the day. The ointment should be placed at least 3 times a day. Avoid blowing your nose for at least 2 weeks.

RESUMING ACTIVITIES

Your exercise regimen must be lessened to some extent for the first few weeks following surgery. Upper body exercise is especially prohibited, as it is more likely to cause turbinate bleeding. Walking is always permissible. PLEASE CHECK WITH THE OFFICE BEFORE RESUMING ANY OTHER EXERCISE OR ATHLETIC ACTIVITY.

YOUR FIRST POSTOPERATIVE OFFICE VISIT

The appointment for your first postoperative visit should be made prior to your surgery, and will most probably be the day after surgery. At that time, most of your packing will be removed. Please eat something nourishing and caloric prior to this visit.

RETURN TO WORK OR SCHOOL

The average patient is able to return to school or work three to five days following the surgery. Physical activity will be curtailed, as discussed above.

LONG-TERM CARE

Please realize that the turbinates may require six full weeks for complete healing. Often there will be crusting at the healing sites that will need to be removed by the doctor. This may require multiple visits for the first six weeks. This is normal and should not be cause for alarm. The crusts may interfere with proper breathing, so it is important to keep these visits. Continued use of saline irrigations will aid in reducing the amount of crusting.

If you have any questions, please call us at (804) 378-7443. We are always happy to answer your questions, and if you should have a problem, this number is answered 24 hours a day.