

POSTOPERATIVE CARE
RHINOPLASTY (NASAL SURGERY)

You have just had a “Rhinoplasty” or surgery on your nose. There are incisions inside your nose and in some instances a small incision in the tissue between your nostrils. All your incisions, inside and outside, have been closed with dissolving sutures. The cartilage in your nose, and often the bones, have been carved apart, then reshaped and repositioned. You have delicate tape and a molded plastic “splint” glued to the outside of your nose. The purpose of the tape and splint is to hold your cartilage and bone in their new position while they heal together, to minimize the swelling that you will have and to protect your new nose.

This guide is written to provide you with instructions for the care of your new nose and to answer questions that you inevitable will have as your healing progresses. Please keep these instructions on hand for at least the next month as a reference source. Don’t hesitate to call with questions that are not answered here in print.

1. Activities

For tonight and tomorrow night, please keep on your back with your head elevated on two pillows. Sleeping in a recliner is ideal. If you sleep on your side, your nose will swell closed on the “down” side. Continuing to sleep on your back with your head slightly elevated for the next week is preferred.

Please keep ice packs across the plastic splint on your nose and both your eyes until you go to sleep tonight and throughout the day tomorrow (15 minutes on every 2 hours). This is to minimize bruising around the eyes, minimize swelling of your nose and to make you more comfortable.

Your nose will drain some mucus and blood for the first two to three days after surgery. This is perfectly normal. We may send you home with a drip pad of gauze under the nose to absorb this drainage. Please change the gauze as needed. We will clean out your nose at the first post-op visit. Don’t blow your nose for a week. You may use nasal saline spray regularly to help thin the drainage.

You may walk as much as you like. For two weeks, please do not run or do any aerobic exercises. This includes lifting anything over 10 pounds (including a child). DO NOT bend forward with your head down and do not strain in anyway. If you feel constipated, please use stool softeners and laxatives as needed (Colace and Dulcolax are examples). Please ask us if you have any questions about activities.

You may wear your glasses lightly resting on the cast or taped to your forehead. Please wear the lightest glasses that you own. If you have some tenderness, please remove the glasses for an hour or two.

Please do not drive for 24 hours after your surgery. After a day you may drive limited amounts.

2. Diet

You may eat a normal diet after surgery. Your sense of smell may be reduced from swelling. Please drink lots of liquids to help your body recover from the anesthesia and your surgery.

3. Medications

You will be given pain medications to take only if you need them. Do not take them if you do not feel pain. These pills contain a narcotic and may make you feel lightheaded or even nauseated. We would prefer that you take 650mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 4 to 6 hours instead of the pain med, if this controls your discomfort.

You will be given antibiotic pills to take. Please take the medication as instructed until they are all gone. It is important for proper healing.

Please resume taking all your normal medications the day after surgery. We do recommend a daily multivitamin for about a month after surgery for optimum healing.

4. Wound Care

You may sniff backward through your nose. Please do not blow the nose until you have been seen postoperatively. Ayr and Ocean Spray are common brands of nasal saline spray that should be used, two squirts in each nostril at least 4 times a day prevents dryness of the lining of the nose and helps thin out mucus and blood.

We will also give you an ointment to apply gently to the sutures in between your nose. Please apply it three times a day with a Q-tip. The sutures dissolve faster with ointment to keep them moist.

You may have had some cartilage borrowed from the ear to use for support in your nose. If so, the incision on the ear has been closed with the same dissolving sutures. Please gently apply the ointment three times daily with a Q-tip as well. If there is a dressing covering the ear, we will remove this in the office.

The plastic splint on the outside of your nose will be removed by us about a week after surgery. You may wash your face and shampoo the day following surgery. Please do not let water run onto the splint. Please pat it dry gently with a clean towel if any water gets on it.

5. Visits to our office

We will set up your postop visit on an appropriate schedule. The first one may range from one day after surgery to one week after surgery. Dressings and the splint will be removed, and your nose will gently be cleaned out. The following visit may be one week (or up to one month) later, depending on the extent of surgery and how you are healing.

6. Long-Term Care

Swelling of your nose and around the cheeks and upper lip is to be expected after surgery. There will be more swelling the second and third days than the day of surgery. The tenderness and swelling around the nose should be gone within two weeks. The tip of the nose may feel stiff for a few months. The tip of the nose may be swollen for a few months after surgery. Numbness is also normal following surgery. You will gradually regain sensation over the top of your nose.

Breathing through your nose will improve after we clean your nose out at the first postop visit. By a week after surgery, your breathing should be much improved. Please frequently use the saline spray to help this.

Sun exposure will slow down the healing process. After the first postop visit. Please use sun block of at least SPF 30 daily for at least three months following surgery, ideally with wearing a hat as well.

For any other questions that may arise, please do not hesitate to contact the office. We would far rather answer your questions than to have you worry needlessly. We very much hope that you enjoy your new nose in both function and appearance.

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