



Carolina Ear, Nose & Throat Head and Neck Surgery Center

Surgery of the Nose

When Should Surgery Be Considered to Correct a Chronically Stuffy Nose?

Millions of Americans perennially suffer the discomfort of nasal stuffiness. This may be indicative of chronic breathing problems that don't respond well to ordinary treatment. The blockage may be related to structural abnormalities inside the nose or to swelling caused by allergies or viruses.

There are numerous causes of nasal obstruction. A deviated septum (the partition between the nostrils) can be crooked or bent as the result of abnormal growth or injury. This can partially or completely close one or both nasal passages. The deviated septum can be corrected with a surgical procedure called septoplasty.

Overgrowth of the turbinates is yet another cause of stuffiness. (The turbinates are the tissues that line the inside of the nasal passages.) Sometimes the turbinates need treatment to make them smaller and expand the nasal passages. Treatments include injection, freezing, and partial removal. Allergies, too, can cause internal nasal swelling, and allergy evaluation and therapy may be necessary.

Can Surgery Correct a Stuffy, Aging Nose?

Aging is a common cause of nasal obstruction. This occurs when cartilage in the nose and its tip are weakened by age and droop because of gravity, causing the sides of the nose to collapse inward, obstructing air flow. Mouth breathing or noisy and restricted breathing are common.

Try lifting the tip of your nose to see if you breathe better. If so, the external adhesive nasal strips that athletes have popularized may help. Or talk to an otolaryngologist about septoplasty, which will involve trimming, reshaping or repositioning portions of septal cartilage. Internal splints or soft packing may be placed in the nostrils to hold the septum in its new position. Usually, patients experience some swelling for a week or two. However, after the packing is removed, most people enjoy a dramatic improvement in breathing.

What Treatment Is Needed for a Broken Nose?

Bruises around the eyes and/or a slightly crooked nose following injury usually indicate a fractured nose. If the bones are pushed over or out to one side, immediate medical attention is ideal. But once soft tissue swelling distorts the nose, waiting 48-72 hours for a doctor's appointment may actually help the doctor in evaluating your injury as the swelling recedes. (Apply ice while waiting to see the doctor.) What's most important is whether the nasal bones have been displaced, rather than just fractured or broken.

For markedly displaced bones, surgeons often attempt to return the nasal bones to a straighter position under local or general anesthesia. This is usually done within seven to ten days after injury, so that the bones don't heal in a displaced position.

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