
Postoperative Instructions for your Nasal Surgery

Swelling and Numbness - Every surgical procedure is accompanied by postoperative swelling. You'll be swollen the morning after surgery, and the tissues usually continue to swell until the second or third day after surgery. Swelling is a normal reaction of your body to promote healing after the operation. The swelling will be most noticeable above the splint, between your eyes. By the end of the first week, most of the visible swelling will be gone, and most patients feel comfortable going out in public at that time.

The swelling will usually be subsided enough at the end of one week that you can go right from the appointment where your splint is removed, to the grocery store. When your splint is removed, you and Dr. Heir will be able to tell where the rest of the swelling is, but most other people won't be able to see it. Don't be concerned if you show more swelling in your nose, eyes, and upper lip after the splint has been removed. This is more noticeable to you than to anyone else. It may take 10-12 months for ALL swelling to disappear and for your final rhinoplasty results to show.

You may experience some degree of numbness of the tip of your nose for up to one year. You may have some swelling and the incision site inside the nose may remain swollen or feel firm for many months after rhinoplasty surgery. Remember swelling is your body's normal reaction to trauma and is never permanent.

Cold Packs - Iced gauze pads or cloths should be applied to the eyes and cheek for the first 48 hours to minimize swelling and discoloration. A washcloth soaked in ice water will be wrung out and placed over your eyes and along the sides of your nose. Changing this cloth every ten to fifteen minutes. The cold cloths are extremely valuable in reducing swelling and bruising from the operation. We use the cold wash cloths instead of ice in a plastic bag because the ice is too heavy to place on your nose after surgery however; "frozen peas or corn" in zip lock baggies may be used in place of cloths or pads.

Head Elevation - For the first week following surgery, keep your head elevated as much as possible in order to minimize the swelling. If you can, sleep on two or three pillows to keep your head above the level of your heart for 1-2 weeks following your surgery. To accomplish this, place two or three pillows under the head of the mattress and one or two on top of the mattress. Try not to roll on to your face. Some patients find a reclining chair placed at a 45-degree angle to be more comfortable than a bed. Do not bend over, tie your shoes, perform any lifting, and avoid any other activity where your face is below the level of your heart. If you have little children, bend at the knees or sit on the floor and let them climb in to your lap.

Pain Relief and Medications - The amount of discomfort from a rhinoplasty is surprisingly small. You will be given a prescription for a pain reliever to use in case you do experience discomfort. Use Tylenol or the iced wash cloths for minor pain. No aspirin or aspirin-containing products should be used until two weeks after surgery. If you are not sufficiently relieved of pain, try alternating doses of Extra Strength Tylenol[®] and the pain medication prescribed by Dr. Heir. If the pain is severe, notify Dr. Heir so that appropriate steps can be taken.

Depression - Your nose will be swollen and bandaged. It may be bruised. You may be weak for a couple of days after the surgical sedatives wear off. You probably aren't used to sleeping on your back with your head elevated. You will not be able to exercise, and your daily routine will be disrupted.

Considering all of these factors, a brief period of depression after a rhinoplasty is completely normal. Because a rhinoplasty is a totally elective operation, unlike an appendectomy, we tend to forget that it is a real surgical procedure and not as easy as having a haircut.

These temporary setbacks, however, are a necessary part of obtaining the lasting benefits of your operation. Going through surgery is stressful, even if the changes made were greatly desired. Just remember that the depression is normal and will resolve quickly. Find a good book to read, watch television, or find some other way to distract yourself. The depression will pass quickly.

Bruising - You may bruise under your eyes after surgery. The iced wash cloths through the first night will help minimize your bruising. Just like a bruise anywhere else on the body, bruising from nasal surgery will spread, change color, fade, and finally disappear. In most people it is almost gone at the end of one week, and completely gone in ten to fourteen days. It is a normal

consequence of the operation and not a cause for concern. You may disguise the discoloration with makeup if you wish however, stay away from the incision area until 2 days after the sutures have been removed.

Do not worry if the swelling or bruising is more pronounced around one eye than the other. Only rarely is the amount of bruising or swelling exactly the same on both sides. The differences will resolve as the swelling and bruising diminish.

Sleeping - Rest as much as possible the day of your surgery. Try to sleep on your back for one week after surgery, and sleep alone to avoid the risk of your partner bumping into your new nose during sleep. You should also abstain from sex for two weeks. Sex is exercise, and it increases the blood pressure to your face.

Diet - Upon arriving home from surgery, begin with clear liquids until fully awake then begin regular food intake with soft foods. Avoid foods requiring prolonged chewing and avoid excessive facial movements for one week. Soups, mashed potatoes, stewed chicken, ground beef, or any easily chewable food is permissible. Steaks, French bread, etc. should be avoided for at least one week. AVOID STRAINING DURING ELIMINATION. You may use a straw for thin liquids only. Don't pull a milk shake through a straw; it's too hard on your face for the first week after surgery. Proper diet, plenty of water and walking are strongly recommended to avoid constipation. If you need a laxative, we recommend Correctol™ (your pharmacist will give it to you without a prescription).

Tobacco/Alcohol - DO NOT SMOKE & AVOID ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION for 3 weeks. Both of these activities significantly slow the healing process

Nasal Breathing After Surgery - You probably will not be able to breathe well through your nose for one week after surgery. As with any operation, there will be some swelling afterward, and the swelling that occurs on the inside of the nose will partially obstruct your breathing. Also, crusting will occur along the incision lines inside your nose where you cannot clean for the first week.

The result of these factors is a stuffy nose. If you find that you **can** breathe somewhat through your nose after surgery, that's fine. Sniffing is okay, too. Keeping the nasal lining tissues moist with nasal saline spray; 2 puffs per nostril 4-6 times per day will reduce stuffiness and promote healing and provide comfort. Mouth breathing can dry your lips, so you might want to carry and use some Vaseline or lipstick. You may also find it more comfortable to sleep with a humidifier in the bedroom and a cup of water on the nightstand.

As the swelling inside and outside your nose subsides over the following weeks, your nasal airway will improve even further.

Blowing - Do not blow your nose for two weeks. You may sniff back forcefully, but no nose blowing. Blowing your nose is harder on the healing tissues than sniffing.

Sneezing - Most people sneeze after nasal surgery; it's one of the body's responses to irritation in the nose. If you must sneeze, sneeze with your mouth open. Do not allow the sneeze to come through your nose, and don't try to stifle it. If sneezing becomes a recurring problem for you in the first few days after surgery, Dr. Heir may recommend an antihistamine/decongestant to help.

Activities - Nasal surgery usually hurts very little. Many people feel quite "normal" within a day or two. If your work keeps you sedentary, you may return when you are able. Avoid all exercise for the first two weeks after surgery, and avoid strenuous exercise or weightlifting for four weeks. Too much exercise too early can raise your blood pressure and cause bleeding and swelling.

Joggers may walk briskly after two weeks and jog after three weeks. Tennis players may hit groundstrokes after two weeks and play after three weeks. Work back into your regular exercise routine slowly. Check to see that your ski or swim goggles or your racquetball eye protectors don't press into your new nose.

Clothing - Wear shirts or sweaters that fasten in front or in back and do not need to be pulled tightly over your head for the first week. Avoid bending over to tie your shoes.

Oral Hygiene - Brush teeth gently with a soft toothbrush only. Avoid manipulation of upper lip to keep nose at rest.

Bathing - The nasal splint is mostly waterproof—after all, you had the iced washcloths on it during the entire first night after surgery. So it won't dissolve if you get water on it, but still, try to keep it as dry as you can. When you're in the shower, do not use hot water, which dilates blood vessels and may promote bleeding. Tilt your head back while facing away from the showerhead

to wash your hair, or have someone else wash your hair in a sink. Use hand-held hair dryers on a medium or cool setting with a diffuser.

Skin Care - When you wash your face, don't get soaps or cleansers too close to tape of the splint, and don't press hard enough on your cheek to move the skin next to the tape; you might loosen the splint. You may wish to use cotton balls or a makeup sponge for the first week.

After the doctor removes your cast, the skin of your nose may be gently cleansed with a mild soap or gentle formulated cleanser. Do not use Retin-A, or any alpha hydroxy acids around or on the nose area for one month after surgery.

Hair Removal - Do not tweeze eyebrows for 2 weeks after surgery. Do not pluck hairs from the nose for 6 months after surgery.

Sunscreen and Makeup: It is imperative that your nose be protected from the sun for a good 6 months after facelift surgery. Use a sunscreen with a skin-protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 at all times. Sunscreen should be applied 15 minutes before your makeup.

You may begin applying makeup 2 days after your sutures are removed from the tip of the nose. If no sutures were used, you may begin using makeup as soon as your cast is removed. Any discoloration may be covered with oil-based make up or using one of the cover up products available in our office. If you have questions regarding makeup, we will be happy to assist you.

Driving - You may drive as soon as your postoperative fatigue subsides, usually within about a day or two after surgery. Do not drive if you are taking the prescription pain medicine or the Valium, or if you feel the surgical sedatives haven't completely worn off yet, or if you feel the swelling is interfering with your vision.

Sun Exposure - Absolutely avoid sun exposure, sun lamps, or tanning beds for 6 weeks after surgery. Heat may cause your nose to swell.

Eyewear - Do not wear regular glasses or sunglasses that rest on the bridge of your nose for at least 4 weeks. We will instruct you how to tape the glasses to your forehead to avoid pressure on your nose. Contact lenses may be worn the day after surgery.

Dressing - A folded 2" x 2" cotton gauze pad will be placed under your nose and taped into position as a drip pad after surgery. This "mustache dressing" will catch any drainage. It is normal for some red blood to appear on the pad and for the pad to need changing several times during the first several days following surgery. Starting the morning after surgery, you probably will not have any more drainage, and you can dispense with the mustache dressing. If you do continue to have some nasal drainage for a couple days, replace the folded gauze pad rather than continually mopping your nose with a Kleenex.

Nasal Splint and Sutures - Sutures are typically removed 5-7 days after surgery. At your one week visit Dr. Heir will gently remove the splint and any crusts in your nose, and you should be able to breathe more easily through your nose immediately. Do not be apprehensive about this appointment. It will not be uncomfortable. On the contrary, you'll probably feel much better afterward.

Cleansing the Nose Area - After the tape is removed, you will be able to see the incision in the skin at the bottom of your nose. Clean the incision very gently with hydrogen peroxide on a Q-tip three times a day for the next couple of days. These cleanings will help the incision heal and fade rapidly.

Clean your nasal skin gently with cotton balls and a mild soap several times a day for the next week. It has been hidden under the tape for a week and needs to be cleaned. Apply and remove makeup gently. Don't rub or push on your nose for several weeks.

After the splint is removed, you may clean the inside of your nose gently with Vaseline on a Q-tip. The Vaseline will keep the inside of your nose moist and make it more comfortable. Do not place the Q-tip so far up that you lose sight of the cotton tip. (And don't clean your nose during the first week when the splint is still on; the Vaseline will loosen the tape.)

DON'T TAKE CHANCES! If you are concerned about anything you consider significant, **you should contact Dr. Heir by calling him at 916-419-4588. If the office is closed**, please dial Ext. 5 to be connected with Dr. Heir's cell phone.