



Virginia Ear, Nose, & Throat Associates

POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS – RHINOPLASTY

You have just had a “rhinoplasty” or surgery on your nose. There are incisions inside your nose and, in some instances, a small incision on the tissue between your nostrils. All of your incisions, inside and outside, have been closed with dissolving sutures. The cartilage in your nose, and often the bones, have been divided, then reshaped and repositioned. There is no packing in your nose. You have a molded plastic “cast” glued to the outside of your nose. The purpose of the cast is to hold the cartilage and bone in their new position while they heal together, to minimize any swelling that you 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 inevitably 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 our office (see below) if you have any questions that are not answered here in print. Enjoy your new nose!

I. Activities

1. For tonight and tomorrow night, please sleep on your back with your head elevated on two pillows. Sleeping in a recliner chair 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.
2. Please keep ice packs across the plastic cast on your nose and both of your eyes for the first 24 hours or so after surgery. 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off, or as tolerated, should suffice. This is to help prevent bruising of your eyes, minimize swelling of your nose and face, and to generally make you more comfortable.
3. Your nose will drain some mucus and a bit of blood for the first day or two after your surgery. This is perfectly normal. We will send you home with a drip pad of gauze under your nose to absorb this drainage. Please change the gauze as needed. Don’t blow your nose for a week, but you may sniff backwards as needed.
4. Do not place yourself in any situation in which you may potentially harm your nose for at least three weeks following surgery.

We recommend no aerobic activity, heaving lifting (including a child), straining, bending forward or sexual activity for at least one week, slowly returning to full activities over the next two weeks. Please consult our staff if you have any questions concerning a specific activity.

5. We recommend that you avoid wearing glasses for three weeks following surgery. If glasses are absolutely necessary, you may wear them lightly resting on your nasal cast, or taped to your forehead. It is imperative to wear the lightest pair of glasses available. You may insert your contact lenses two days after surgery.

The nasal cast will be removed one week following surgery. We still recommend avoiding glasses for three to four weeks following surgery. There are tricks that can be employed if glasses are absolutely necessary. Please consult our staff to discuss these options.

6. Please do not drive or operate machinery for 24 hours after your surgery. Until that time, you will still be affected by the drugs you were given during your surgery, and it is not safe for you to drive. After a day, if you are not requiring pain medication, you may drive limited amounts.

II. Diet

1. You may eat a normal diet after surgery. You may find that swallowing solid foods is a bit difficult while your nose is stuffy. Your sense of smell may not be as good for the first week, but it will soon return. Please do drink lots of liquids to help your body recover from your anesthesia and surgery.

III. Medications

1. You will be given pain medication to take only if you need them. Do not take them more often than instructed, and do not take them if you do not feel pain. These pills contain a mild narcotic that may make you lightheaded or even nauseated. We would prefer that you take one or two over the counter 200mg ibuprofen tablets every four to six hours if this controls your discomfort.
2. You may be given antibiotic pills to take. If you are given them, please take them as instructed, as they are important for proper healing. Take them until they are completely gone.
3. You may be given prednisone (steroids) to take for a week. This is to help reduce swelling and discomfort. Please take them exactly as the instructions are written.
4. You may be given a packet of Arnica Montana pills to take to help prevent bruising. Please take them exactly as instructed on the package.
5. Please resume taking all of your normal medications the day after surgery. It is wise to take a daily multivitamin pill during the month after surgery.

IV. Wound Care

1. You may sniff backwards through your nose at any time. Please don't blow your nose for a week after surgery.
2. You will be asked to start using saline spray in your nose the day after surgery. You can purchase saline spray in our office or over the counter at your drug store. Any brand is acceptable; Ayr and Ocean are common brands. You should use two squirts into each nostril at least four times a day, and you may use it as often as you like. The saline reverses the drying effect the surgery has on your nasal lining and should be used for at least the next three months. Do not use any other sprays in your nose unless you have been given specific instructions to do so by our office. Please do contact us if you have any questions in this regard.
3. If you do have a small incision in the tissue between your nostrils, we will give you an ointment to apply there. You should apply the ointment three times a day with a Q-Tip and rub it in well. We have used dissolving sutures to close your incision, but the sutures dissolve only if kept moist with ointment. Continue to apply the ointment three times a day until the sutures have wiped away, at about a week.

4. You may have had some cartilage borrowed from your ear to put in your nose. If so, the incision in the rim of the bowl of your ear has been closed with the same dissolving sutures used in your nose. Apply the ointment to your ear sutures three times a day with a Q-Tip and continue to do so until all the sutures wipe away in about a week. You will also have a dressing on the front of your ear, and one on the back. These dressings are sewn to your ear, and we will remove them on the day after surgery. Don't try to remove or change these ear dressings.
5. If you have an implant inserted into your chin, you will have a dressing taped to your entire chin. Once this dressing is removed, you should begin to apply ointment to the incision line under your chin three times a day until the sutures wipe away in about a week.
6. You may wash your face and shampoo your hair the day following surgery. It will not cause damage if your nasal cast dressing gets a bit wet, though we ask that you not run water directly onto the cast. Similarly, you may wash around all of the incisions on your face the day after surgery, though please use antibiotic ointment on the wounds before washing so that it might "waterproof" the incision line.

V. Visits to Our Office

1. You will be seen in our office one to seven days after surgery. Your nose will be gently cleaned out, and you will be started on a nasal saline spray. If you have a dressing on your ear this will be removed at this visit.
2. The nasal cast will be removed in our office one week after surgery. Your nose will be gently cleaned again at the time of this visit.
3. Your next visit will be at one month after surgery.
4. Normally, we will then see you at 3, 6 and 12-month intervals after surgery. There is no charge for these visits. You may have postoperative pictures taken at these visits.

VI. Long-term Care

1. Swelling of your nose and the surrounding areas of your cheek will invariably occur after nasal surgery. The swelling will gradually resolve over varying time periods. Swelling at the upper part of your nose between your eyes that is present when your plastic cast is removed should be gone by the end of the second week. The same is true for minor swelling of your cheeks at the sides of your nose. You may have some swelling of your upper lip (and even under your upper lip over your teeth) at the bottom of your nose. The mild tenderness and swelling here, too, will be gone within two weeks. There may well be minor swelling and a feeling of stiffness in the tip of your nose that persists well beyond the two-week period. In many cases, the tip may not be as delicate-appearing as we want it to be for up to six months after surgery. In some cases, we may inject a small amount of steroid into the bridge of the nose to help resolve this swelling.
2. Bruising around your nose in your cheeks and lower eyelids is very common after rhinoplasty surgery. It should be completely resolved by two weeks after surgery. If this bruising presents a problem in your return to work, cover-up makeup usually masks it well.
3. Numbness over your nose is also quite normal following surgery. You will gradually regain sensation over the top of your nose. You can expect the tip to be slightly numb and "stiff" feeling for up to three months after surgery.

4. Breathing through your nose will gradually improve after surgery. It is vital for return of nasal health that you spray the inside of your nose frequently with saline spray. Antibiotic ointment applied with a cotton-tipped applicator can help soften any crusting and help in its removal.
5. You may be instructed in a set of Nasal Massage Exercises. These exercises are intended to keep your nose narrowed and straight as the nasal bones heal back to the facial bones. If you are instructed in using these exercises, please be diligent in using them for the first month after your surgery. In most cases they are not needed beyond that time.
6. You must protect your new nose from the sun for three months after surgery. Sun exposure will cause swelling in the nose and will retard the healing process. The skin of your nose will actually be very likely to burn from sun exposure. Good protection for this three-month period means both a brimmed hat and sunblock of at least SPF 15.

If you have any questions or concerns following your surgery do not hesitate to contact our office at

804-484-3700

We would much rather answer your questions than to have you worry, perhaps needlessly.

We very much hope that you enjoy your new nose in both function and appearance.