



Nasal Surgery

Septorhinoplasty

Septorhinoplasty is surgery to improve the function of your nose. It might also change the appearance of your nose. This handout explains how to prepare for your operation and how to care for yourself afterward.

Following these guidelines will help you avoid complications and recover more quickly.

How to Prepare for Your Operation

Medicines

- Stop taking all aspirin products or anti-inflammatory medicines and other products that affect blood clotting 2 weeks before your day of surgery. These include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve), vitamin E, and some herbal supplements. Stopping these medicines before surgery will help control bleeding during your operation.
- If these medicines are not stopped, your surgery may need to be rescheduled.
- You will be given prescriptions for post-operative medicines at your visit today. We recommend you fill them before your surgery.

24 Hours Before Surgery

- **Take 2 showers:** Take 1 shower the night before and a second shower the morning of your operation. Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.

Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face and hair. (See directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair. Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothing.

- **Arrival time:** Your arrival time is determined the day before your surgery. The pre-surgery nurse will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your operation. If you are having surgery on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the pre-surgery nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206-598-6334.

The pre-surgery nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and will remind you:

- Not to eat or drink after a certain time
- Which of your regular medicines to take or not take
- To sip only enough water to swallow your pills

- **Heating blanket:** To reduce your risk of infection, you will be covered with a heating blanket to warm your body while you wait to go into the operating room. Ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.
- **Fasting:** Do **NOT** eat or drink anything for 8 hours before your surgery. This includes not chewing gum, using breath mints, etc. If you do not follow these fasting instructions, your surgery may have to be rescheduled.

Day of Surgery

- On the day of surgery, wear comfortable clothing that is easy to take off. We recommend a shirt or blouse that opens in the front, not a top that goes on over your head.
- You will go home several hours after your operation. **After general anesthesia:**
 - You will need someone to drive you home after your surgery.
 - You will need to have a responsible person stay with you for the first 24 hours.
 - We recommend that you arrange to have someone care for you for the first 2 to 3 days after surgery.

Self-Care After Your Surgery

Dressing

- You may have a gauze dressing (bandage) under your nostrils when you leave the recovery room. You may change this as needed.
- A small amount of drainage that is tinged with blood is normal for 1 to 2 days after surgery.
- If you have heavy drainage (you have to change your dressing more often than every 15 minutes), call the clinic or the after-hours number on the back page of this handout.

Incision Care

On the day after your surgery, begin cleaning your incision(s). Follow these steps:

- Wash your hands with soap and hot water.
- Prepare a solution that is half hydrogen peroxide and half water. Dip Q-tips into this solution and gently clean around your sutures (if you have them) at the base of your nose. **Do this 4 times every day.**

- After cleaning your incisions, use a clean cotton swab to put a thin layer of the ointment your provider gave you on your incision. Keeping the incision(s) moist with ointment will help keep scabs from forming and will speed up healing.

Showering

- You may shower the day after surgery, but keep your external nasal splint dry. (See below.)

External Nasal Splint

- **Do not remove the white external splint.** The external nasal splint is put over your nose to make people aware that you have had surgery and to keep them from bumping your nose.
- Do not soak the splint with water.
- Keep the splint on your nose until your first follow-up visit.

Internal Nasal Splints

- If you have them, **do not remove the internal nasal splints.** These are large plastic splints that are sewn to your *septum* (the membrane between your nostrils). They are placed to put pressure on your septum to keep a *hematoma* (blood clot) from forming.
- These splints will stay in place until your first follow-up visit.

Head Elevation

- You will have the most bruising and swelling 48 to 72 hours after surgery. When you get home from the hospital, elevate your head. This will help reduce swelling.
- Keep your head elevated for 1 to 2 weeks after surgery, especially while you are sleeping. Using 2 pillows, a foam wedge, or sleeping in a recliner chair will keep your head elevated the right amount.

Ear Dressing

- If you had cartilage taken from your ear, you might have a cotton ball dressing in the ear that cartilage was taken from. **The cotton ball is sewn to your ear, so do not try to remove it.**
- Protect this ear dressing from water when you shower.
- You may apply the ointment your provider gave you to the cotton ball dressing 4 times a day to keep it moist.
- This dressing will be removed at your first follow-up visit.

Cold Wet Compresses to Your Eyes and Cheeks

- **Right after surgery:** Elevate your head and begin applying gauze or wash cloths soaked in ice water to your eyes, face, and neck area. This will help reduce bruising and swelling.
- **The first 3 days:** Continue to apply these cold wet compresses 20 to 30 minutes each hour while you are awake for the first 72 hours (3 days) after surgery.
- **Weeks 1 through 2 after surgery:** Keep your head elevated, especially while you are sleeping. Use 2 pillows, a foam wedge, or sleep in a recliner chair to keep your head elevated the right amount.

Saline Nasal Spray

- **Saline is the only product you should be spraying into your nose after surgery.** Saline will keep your nose moist and prevent scabs from forming. You will be given a saline irrigation bottle at the time of your surgery.
- You can also use Ocean or Ayr brand saline spray, which you can buy at the drugstore without a prescription.
- Begin using nasal saline the morning after your surgery and use it at least 4 to 5 times a day.

Afrin

- Afrin is a decongestant that relieves the build-up of mucus. It works by constricting (narrowing) blood vessels in your body.
- You will first use this spray before surgery while you are in pre-op. Using Afrin at this time will lessen bleeding during surgery.
- Afrin can also be used after surgery. But, it should only be used if you have extreme congestion and/or a lot of bleeding.
- Afrin should not be used for more than 3 days in a row.

Medicines

Antibiotics

You will receive a prescription for an antibiotic on the day we take your medical history and do your physical exam. **Start taking this antibiotic the same day of surgery, after your surgery is done.** If you have nausea after surgery, you can wait until the next day to begin taking the antibiotic. Once you begin taking it, you must continue taking it as prescribed until all the pills are gone.

Pain Medicine

You will also receive a prescription for a narcotic pain medicine on the day of your history and physical. Use this after surgery for any discomfort you may have. We recommend you eat something small and light before taking this medicine to help prevent nausea.

What to Avoid After Surgery

- **Driving or drinking alcohol.** Do not drive or drink alcohol while you are taking narcotic pain medicine and for 24 hours after you stop taking it.
- **Contact sports or any activities where your head or face might be touched,** for 6 weeks.
- **Bending over and lifting heavy objects.** Do not bend over or lift heavy items for 1½ to 2 weeks after surgery.
- **Strenuous activity.** Avoid strenuous activity for 1½ to 2 weeks after surgery. Activity will raise your blood pressure, and a rise in blood pressure will increase the amount of inflammation you have after surgery.
- **Blowing your nose.** Avoid blowing your nose for 2 weeks after surgery. Blowing your nose can start a nosebleed and disrupt any grafting that may be in place.
- **Constipation.** Narcotic pain medicine can slow down your digestive system and cause constipation. Avoid becoming constipated by increasing fluids (drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day) and the amount of fiber in your diet. Fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole-grain breads and cereals are high in fiber. You may use an over-the-counter stool softener if needed. These are available without a prescription at the drugstore.
- **Wearing glasses.** Do not wear any type of glasses on your nose. Placing any weight on your nose could possibly move the bone or any grafting material. If you must use glasses, tape them to your forehead for 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.
- **Sun exposure.** The skin on your nose will be very sensitive to sunlight after your surgery. It is important to protect your skin for 1 year after your surgery. Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, wear hats with brims, and avoid being in the sunlight as much as possible.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Appointments: Call Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery Center, 206-598-4022.

Established patients with questions about your treatment plan: Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Nurse Voice Mail Line, 206-598-7535.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Otolaryngology resident on call to be paged.

Medicines After Surgery

- Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve), vitamin E, or herbal supplements for 2 weeks after surgery unless your surgeon has told you it is OK for you to start or restart them. These medicines can cause bleeding.
- Follow the directions on all your discharge medicines:
 - Antibiotic
 - Pain medicine
 - Saline rinse bottle

Follow-up Visits

Your first follow-up appointment is at _____
TIME
on _____
DAY/DATE

When to Call Your Doctor or Nurse

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Signs of infection in your incision:
 - Redness
 - Swelling
 - Increased pain
 - Foul-smelling or watery discharge from your incision
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Changes in your vision
- Severe nausea or vomiting

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