

## Risks of Nasal and Sinus Surgery

### *What you should know*

*This handout explains the risks involved in having nasal or sinus surgery.*

All surgeries involve some risks. Problems with nasal and sinus surgery are rare, but it is important that you know what risks are involved. Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns or questions about your surgery.



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### **Bleeding**

#### **During Surgery**

Most patients lose a little blood during sinus surgery. But, very rarely, there may be more bleeding than expected.

If this happens, your surgeon may place absorbant dressing in your nose or stop the surgery. If there is a lot of bleeding, you may need to be admitted to the hospital.

#### **After Surgery**

It is normal to have some bleeding from your nose for 24 to 48 hours after surgery. But, if you have a lot of bleeding, your surgeon may ask you to visit the clinic or to go to the emergency department.

#### **Blood Transfusion**

Very rarely, a patient loses so much blood after nasal or sinus surgery that they need to receive blood through a *transfusion*. The risks of a blood transfusion include having a bad reaction or getting an infection.

#### **Infection**

It is normal for bacteria to live inside the nose and sinuses. In *sinusitis* (sinus inflammation), the mucus lining that protects your nasal tissues can be damaged. This can allow the normal bacteria or new bacteria to start an infection.

Since surgery also affects the mucus lining, there is a small risk of infection after surgery. You may receive antibiotics during or after surgery to help prevent infection.

## **Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF) Leak**

There is only a thin bone between the sinuses and brain. During sinus surgery, there is a rare chance of damage to this thin bone. This can cause a leak of *cerebrospinal fluid* (the fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord), and can even injure the brain.

A cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leak is very rare. It occurs in less than .1% of sinus surgeries (less than 1 in 1,000 surgeries). A CSF leak can put you at risk for *meningitis* (inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain). If this happens, you may need more surgery and a longer hospital stay.

## **Eye Problems**

There is only a thin bone between the sinuses and eye. During sinus surgery, there is a rare chance of damage to this thin bone. This can cause vision changes or loss of eyesight. These problems most often affect only 1 eye.

Other eye problems that can occur after sinus surgery are double vision, blurred vision, a lot of tearing from the eye (*epiphora*), or bleeding around the eye. These problems occur in less than .1% of sinus surgeries (less than 1 in 1,000 surgeries).

## **Other Risks**

Other rare risks of sinus surgery include:

- Sinus symptoms do not change or they get worse
- Pain in your face, with bruising or swelling around your eyes
- Changes in or loss of your sense of smell or taste
- Numbness or discomfort in your upper front teeth
- Lip swelling, bruising, or short-term numbness

## **Anesthesia Reactions**

- If you have *local anesthesia* (numbing medicine), your risk of having a bad reaction is very low.
- If you have *general anesthesia*, there are rare but serious risks. With general anesthesia, you are asleep during the surgery. Talk with your anesthesiologist to find out more about these risks.

### To Learn More

To learn more about the risks involved in having nasal or sinus surgery, please visit the American Rhinologic Society website at [http://care.american-rhinologic.org/complications\\_ess](http://care.american-rhinologic.org/complications_ess).

## Septoplasty

If you have a *deviated nasal septum* (a problem in the *septum*, the wall that divides the 2 nasal cavities), it may be repaired during surgery. This short procedure is called a *septoplasty*.

If you have a septoplasty, the main risks are:

- Bleeding or infection in your septum
- Numbness of your front teeth (usually short-term)
- A hole in your septum (*septal perforation*)
- The problem in your septum returns
- A change in how your nose looks (very small risk)

Talk with your surgeon if you have questions about any of these risks.

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### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery:  
206.598.4022