

Risks of Nasal and Sinus Surgery

What you should know

This handout explains the risks of having nasal or sinus surgery.

It is rare to have problems with nasal or sinus surgery, but all surgeries involve some risks. Please talk with your doctor if you have any concerns or questions about the risks listed in this handout.



Talk with your doctor if you have any questions.

Bleeding

During Surgery

Most patients lose a little blood during this surgery. Very rarely, there may be more bleeding than expected.

If this happens, your surgeon may stop the surgery. If there is a lot of bleeding, you may need to stay overnight in the hospital after the surgery.

After Surgery

You will have some bleeding from your nose for 24 to 72 hours after surgery. This is normal. If you have a lot of bleeding, call your provider. They may ask you to come to the clinic or go to an emergency department so that a doctor or nurse can assess the problem.

Blood Transfusion

Very rarely, a patient needs to receive blood through a *transfusion* due to bleeding after nasal or sinus surgery. 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 0.1% 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 0.1% of sinus surgeries (less than 1 in 1,000 surgeries).

Other Risks

Other risks of sinus surgery are very rare. They 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
- Nasal dryness or an “empty” feeling in your nose

Anesthesia Reactions

- If you have *local anesthesia* (numbing medicine), your risk of having a bad reaction is very low.

- If you have *general anesthesia*, you will be asleep during the surgery. There are rare but serious risks with having general anesthesia. Talk with your anesthesiologist to find out more about these risks.

Septoplasty

Some patients with sinus problems have a *deviated nasal septum* (a problem in the *septum*, the wall that divides the 2 nasal cavities). If you have this condition, your surgeon may repair it during your sinus 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)

Questions?

Please be sure to talk with your surgeon if you have questions or concerns about any of the risks listed in this handout.

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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 Center:
206.598.4022