

# Having septal surgery on your nose

Ear, Nose and Throat Department

Information for Patients

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## What is septal surgery?

The septum is a thin piece of tough tissue made up of cartilage and bone. It sits between the right and left side of the nose. In some people this septum is bent into one or both sides of the nose causing a blocked nose. This may be due to an injury to the nose, but sometimes it is just the way the cartilage has grown. Septal surgery is used to straighten it.

## Why have I been offered surgery?

You may have been offered surgery to the bend if there is a major blockage that bothers you. Sometimes it is done to create space to give us room to do other things such as sinus surgery. The operation is not meant to change the way your nose looks.

## Is there another option?

An operation is the only definite way to correct a bent septum. Nose spray or drops can help to treat any swelling in the nose that causes it to feel blocked. Septal surgery is not usually offered to children as the nose is still growing.

## How is the operation done?

- You will have a general anaesthetic, so will be asleep.
- It takes 60 minutes.
- A cut is made inside the nose without any scars or bruises on the face. We straighten out the septum by taking away some of the cartilage and bone and close the cut with dissolvable stitches.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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## Does it hurt?

You may have some discomfort after the operation for a few days. You can take simple pain relief ((such as paracetamol) to help with this. Sometimes the front of your nose can be a bit tender for few weeks. You may get some blood-stained watery fluid from your nose for 1 to 2 weeks which is normal.

## Packs and splints

We may need to put a dressing in each side of your nose to keep things in place and stop bleeding. The dressings are called 'packs'. They will block your nose for a short period. You will have to breathe through your mouth. This will make your mouth dry. Drinking water will help to keep it moist. The packs are usually dissolvable but sometimes they are not. If they are not, we will take them out the morning after your operation. There may be some discomfort when we take them out.

## After the operation

Do not blow your nose for about a week, or it might start bleeding. If you are going to sneeze, sneeze with your mouth open to protect your nose.

Your nose will be stuffy and blocked for 10 to 14 days. We may give you some drops or spray to help this. It may take up to 3 months for your nose to settle down and for your breathing to be clear again. Try to stay away from dusty or smoky places. There will be some stitches inside your nose. They will dissolve and fall out by themselves.

## How long will I be off work?

- You can expect to go home the same day of your operation. The surgeon will tell you if you need to stay overnight in the hospital
- Avoid hot showers for 48 hours to reduce the risk of a nose bleed
- You will need to rest at home for at least a week. During that time, you can go for a walk for 20 to 30 minutes to avoid muscle and joint stiffness
- You can start gentle exercise in the 2nd week
- You are fit to drive 1 day after the operation.
- If you do heavy lifting and carrying at work, you should take 2 weeks off. Try to stay away from dusty or smoky places
- You should not play football or other contact sports for about 6 weeks
- Ask your nurse if you need a fit note
- We advise you do not smoke before or after your surgery as cigarette smoke will irritate the inside of your nose and delay healing
- Avoid flying for 2 weeks after the operation

## Can there be problems?

Septal surgery is very safe, but every operation has a small risk.

- Sometimes your nose can bleed after this operation. We may have to put packs into your nose to stop it. Rarely, you may need to return to the theatre under general anaesthesia to stop the bleeding. Rarely, the blood can collect under the lining of the septum. If this occurs you will need to return to the operating theatre to have this drained as soon as possible.
- Infection in your nose after this operation can be serious. **You should see a doctor if your nose is becoming more sore and blocked.**
- Scar tissue can form inside your nose. This often does not cause any problems.
- The operation may rarely leave you with a hole going from one side of your nose to the other. This can cause a whistling noise when you breathe or crusting and nose bleeds. Most of the time it causes no problems at all and needs no treatment. If needed, we can do further surgery to repair the hole in the septum.
- Rarely after many months or years, the shape of your nose may change slightly with a dip in the bridge of your nose. Most people do not notice any change, but if you are not happy with it, it can usually be corrected with another operation.
- Very rarely, you can have some numbness of your upper teeth or lips, which often settles in few months.

## Contact details

If you have any questions, please talk to us at your pre-assessment appointment or on the day of surgery itself. Or, you can contact the ENT department via the switchboard on 0300 303 1573

## More information

For further information, please visit ENT UK at

[https://www.entuk.org/patients/conditions/62/septal\\_surgery/](https://www.entuk.org/patients/conditions/62/septal_surgery/)

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