
What happens after nasal surgery

There are many types of nasal surgery, generally they fall into surgery on the septum (septoplasty); on the turbinates (turbinoplasty), in the sinuses (FESS – Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery).

What can I expect after I have nasal surgery?

The most common symptom after nasal surgery is blockage of the nose. Commonly after surgery of the nose, to prevent bleeding, dissolvable packing is used. This typically causes blockage of the nose, which improve with nasal washes that is prescribed after surgery. These packing starts to dissolve after 2 weeks. Occasionally nasal splints (small pieces of soft plastic) are used to keep the septum straight. These are removed at 1 week after surgery in the office.

After surgery, it takes approximately 6-8 weeks for the lining of the nose to recover and heal completely. During that time, crusting, discharge and blockage is relatively common. In order to improve the healing of the nasal lining, it is important to use the nasal washes to wash away the crust and packing.

There is also frequently a small amount of bleeding, mostly mixed with the mucous that last for a few days. If bleeding is profuse and continues despite simple first aid (pinching the nose, sucking on ice) for 15min, then you need to contact your surgeon and present to your nearest emergency department or call an ambulance. Things that can cause bleeding include heavy lifting, strenuous exercise, blood thinning medications and anti-inflammatory medications.

How to use the nasal washes?

Do not blow your nose initially for the 1st week. Blowing your nose can dislodge clots and packing and lead to bleeding. It is better to use the washes to cleanse the nose instead.

All patients after nasal procedures are given nasal washes to go home. These are large volume washes that are designed to dissolve packing and wash away the crusting and mucous that can occur after nasal surgery. Typically it is used 4-6hourly into both nostrils, but they can be used as frequently as you like. Correct technique is to lean forward over a sink and gently squeeze the bottle through one nostril and letting it run out. Initially after surgery, the washes will not be able to penetrate very deep into the nose because of the packing. Once packing is dissolving, you should expect water to come out of the opposite nostril and even through your mouth.

Is it very painful after nasal surgery?

No, most nasal surgery does not cause a significant amount of pain. Simple pain-killers such as panadol or panadeine is all that is required. If there is uncontrolled pain, you should contact your doctor. It's important to avoid aspirin and blood-thinning medications and anti-inflammatories (such as nurofen, ibuprofen) after surgery as they can cause bleeding.