

## ENT11Septorhinoplasty

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If you need more information, please contact the department directly.

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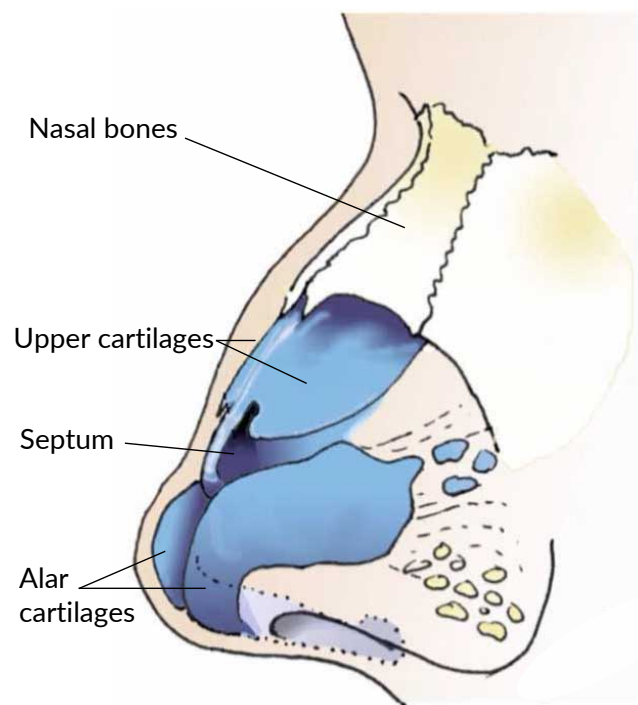
## What is a septorhinoplasty?

A septorhinoplasty (or 'nose job') is an operation to improve the appearance of your nose (rhinoplasty) and to improve how you breathe through your nose (septoplasty).

It involves operating on the bones and cartilage that give your nose its shape and structure and making your septum straight. The septum is the cartilage and bone inside your nose that separates your nostrils.

Your surgeon will assess you and tell you if a septorhinoplasty is suitable for you. However, it is your decision to go ahead with the operation or not. This document will give you information about the benefits and risks to help you to make an informed decision.

If you have any questions that this document does not answer, it is important that you ask your surgeon or the healthcare team. Once all your questions have been answered and you feel ready to go ahead with the procedure, you will be asked to sign the informed consent form. You will then have 14 days to think about your decision. If you change your mind in that time, the procedure will be cancelled.



The bones and cartilage that shape the nose

## Is a septorhinoplasty suitable for me?

Most people who want a septorhinoplasty would prefer a smaller nose with a better shape. Some people want a straighter nose, while others even want a larger nose. Your nose may have just grown into a size or shape you are unhappy with, or it may have been damaged. A crooked or damaged nose can sometimes make one side feel blocked.

The septum is usually straight but it can be deviated (bent), also causing symptoms of a blocked nose. Sometimes it is not possible to fix the shape of your nose without also making your septum straight.

Your surgeon will carry out a detailed assessment of the inside and outside of your nose. They will take photos for your medical records and use them to agree the size and shape you want.

Your surgeon will ask you questions about your medical history. In particular they will ask you if you have nosebleeds, allergies or other nasal problems, and about any damage you have had to your nose. They will also ask you about what you and other people think about your nose and if this affects your self-confidence.

## What are the benefits of surgery?

Your nose should be the size and shape you want, and you should be able to breathe through both nostrils.

The nose, being at the centre of your face, influences your appearance. Most people who have a successful septorhinoplasty are more comfortable with their appearance.

## Are there any alternatives to a septorhinoplasty?

If you have a blocked nose caused by a deviated septum, you may be able to have only a septoplasty. This operation aims to correct a deviation without changing the appearance of your nose.

A rhinoplasty is the only way to change the appearance of your nose. If you have a blocked nose because your nasal bones are crooked or damaged, a rhinoplasty (usually along with a septoplasty) is the only option to improve the way you breathe.

## What will happen if I decide not to have the operation?

A septorhinoplasty may not improve your physical health. The appearance of your nose will stay the same.

If you are having problems breathing because of an allergy, your surgeon may be able to recommend nasal sprays that may help.

## What does the operation involve?

The healthcare team will carry out a number of checks to make sure you have the operation you came in for. You can help by confirming to your surgeon and the healthcare team your name and the operation you are having.

The operation is almost always performed under a general anaesthetic. Your anaesthetist will discuss this with you. You may also have injections of local anaesthetic to help with the pain after the operation. The operation usually takes 1 to 2 hours.

Your surgeon will make a cut on the mucosa (the skin-like lining of the inside of your nose) and lift it off the cartilage and bone. They will remove the parts of the cartilage and bone that are bent and they will put the rest back in a straight position.

Your surgeon can refine the tip of your nose by removing some of the cartilage. If you have a hump (dorsum) on your nose, they will shave it down.

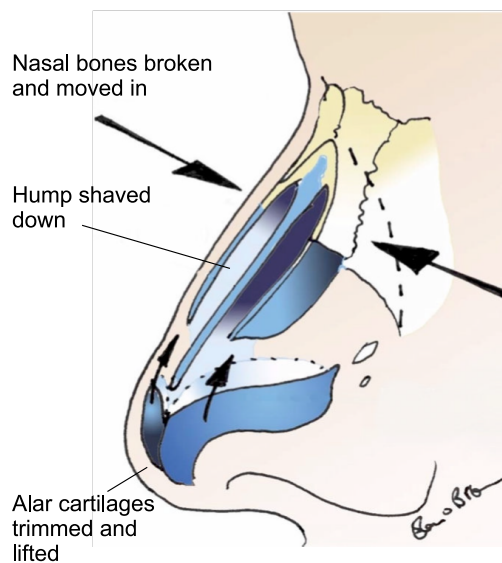
Your surgeon can also straighten and narrow the nasal bones by breaking and then setting them (infracture).

Your surgeon may need to support or rebuild part of your nose using a cartilage graft, a bone graft or an artificial implant. Cartilage is usually taken from your septum, ear or rib.

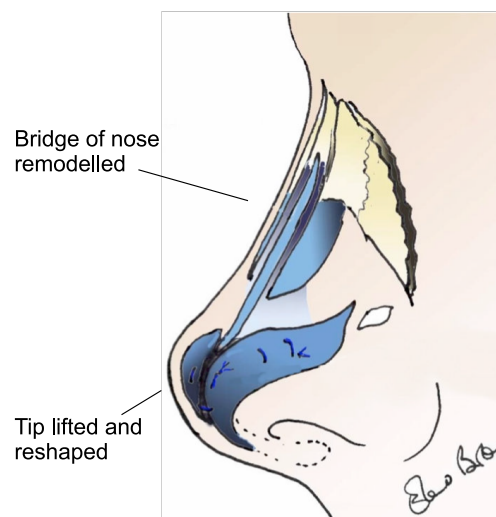
There are two techniques for improving the shape of your nose.

- Closed rhinoplasty – Your surgeon may recommend this technique if your nose is straight and you have a normal tip. They will need to make cuts only on the inside of your nose. You will not have any scars that can be seen. They will close the cuts with dissolvable stitches.
- Open rhinoplasty – Your surgeon may recommend this technique if the operation needs to be more complicated to change your nose to

how you want it. For example, you may have a very crooked nose or badly-shaped tip. Your surgeon will also need to make a small cut across the columella (the external strip of skin that runs down from the tip of your nose between your nostrils) so they can lift the skin off your whole nose. Your surgeon will be able to see the bones and cartilage, and be able to work on them in a more controlled way. They will close the cut on the columella with stitches that will need to be removed.



Procedures involved in a rhinoplasty



The effects of a rhinoplasty

Your surgeon may pack the inside of your nose to prevent bleeding, and place a splint and strapping on the outside of your nose for support.

## What should I do about my medication?

Make sure your healthcare team knows about all the medication you take and follow their advice. This includes all blood-thinning medication as well as herbal and complementary remedies, dietary supplements, and medication you can buy over the counter.

## How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health.

Smoking stops your nose clearing mucus properly and this can increase the feeling of a blocked nose.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight. Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

You can reduce your risk of infection in a surgical wound by keeping warm around the time of the operation. Let the healthcare team know if you feel cold.

If you have not had the coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccine, you may be at an increased risk of serious illness related to Covid-19 while you recover. Speak to your doctor or healthcare team if you would like to have the vaccine.

## What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to reduce the risk of complications.

Any numbers which relate to risk are from studies of people who have had this operation. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for you. Some risks are higher if you are older, obese, you are a smoker or have other health problems. These health problems include diabetes, heart disease or lung disease.

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

You should ask your doctor if there is anything you do not understand.

Your anaesthetist will be able to discuss with you the possible complications of having an anaesthetic.

## General complications of any operation

- Bleeding during or after the operation. You may need to have your nose repacked with a firmer pack or have a pack in the back of your nose (risk: less than 1 in 100). If the bleeding is heavy, you may need a blood transfusion.
- Infection of the surgical site (wound). Let your surgeon know if your nose bleeds or if the skin over your nose becomes red, swells or is tender. An infection usually settles with antibiotics but you may need special dressings and your wound may take some time to heal. In some cases another operation might be needed. Do not take antibiotics unless you are told you need them.
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication. The healthcare team is trained to detect and treat any reactions that might happen. Let your doctor know if you have any allergies or if you have reacted to any medication or tests in the past.
- Blood clot in your leg (deep-vein thrombosis – DVT). This can cause pain, swelling or redness in your leg, or the veins near the surface of your leg to appear larger than normal. The healthcare team will assess your risk. They will encourage you to get out of bed soon after the operation and may give you injections, medication, or special stockings to wear. Let the healthcare team know straight away if you think you might have a DVT.
- Blood clot in your lung (pulmonary embolus), if a blood clot moves through your bloodstream to your lungs. Let the healthcare team know straight away if you become short of breath, feel pain in your chest or upper back, or if you cough up blood. If you are at home, call an ambulance or go immediately to your nearest Emergency department.
- Chest infection. If you have the operation within 6 weeks of catching Covid-19, your risk of a chest infection is increased (see the 'Covid-19' section for more information).

## Specific complications of this operation

- Adhesions, where scar tissue forms deep inside your nose and can obstruct airflow.
- Bleeding caused by infection in the first 2 weeks, if the lining of your nose gets infected (risk: less than 2 in 100). You will need treatment with antibiotics and you may need another operation.
- Unsightly scarring of your skin (risk: less than 1 in 100). The risk is higher if you get an infection. Scars from the cuts inside your nose cannot usually be seen. If the scars tighten, you may need another operation. If you had an open rhinoplasty, the cut on the columella may, rarely, be obvious and need further treatment.
- Developing a collection of blood (haematoma) or an abscess between the layers of your septum. You may need treatment with antibiotics or another operation to drain away blood or pus that has collected.
- Damage to nerves that supply the skin at the tip of your nose, leading to a numb patch. The risk is higher if you have an open rhinoplasty. This usually improves with time.
- Nasal obstruction, if the nasal valve area is reduced when cartilage is removed during surgery (risk: less than 1 in 100). The risk is higher if you already have a nasal problem such as a deviated septum or allergic rhinitis. You may need another operation.
- Making a hole in your septum (risk: less than 5 in 100, increasing to 10 in 100 if you smoke).
- Toxic shock syndrome, which is an infection of your bloodstream (risk: 1 in 10,000).
- Cosmetic problems (risk: 1 in 10, risk if a graft is used: 1 in 6). It is important to have realistic expectations about the size and shape of nose you can have. You and your surgeon should both be clear about what you want. The healing process is difficult to predict and it can take up to 6 months before everything settles completely. A hump can come back or nasal bones can thicken if you have overactive bone healing. Sometimes scar tissue forms under your skin and prevents your nose from shrinking to the right size. You may also get small nodules under your skin or crookedness where the bones were broken. If you have one of these cosmetic problems, you may decide to have another operation (revision surgery).

- Problems at the donor site if you need a cartilage graft from your ear. You may develop a collection of blood (haematoma) (risk: less than 2 in 100) or unsightly scarring (risk: 1 in 100).
- Graft rejection (risk: less than 1 in 100). This usually happens because the graft gets infected.
- Reduced sense of smell (risk: less than 1 in 100).
- Watery eye. This usually improves on its own but rarely another operation might be needed.

## Covid-19

A recent Covid-19 infection increases your risk of lung complications or death if you have an operation under general anaesthetic. This risk reduces the longer it is since the infection. After 7 weeks the risk is no higher than someone who has not had Covid-19. However, if you still have symptoms the risk remains high. The risk also depends on your age, overall health and the type of surgery you are having.

You must follow instructions to self-isolate and take a Covid-19 test before your operation. If you have had Covid-19 up to 7 weeks before the operation you should discuss the risks and benefits of delaying it with your surgeon.

## Consequences of this procedure

- Pain. The healthcare team will give you medication to control the pain and it is important that you take it as you are told to reduce discomfort and prevent headaches.
- Redness caused by tiny burst blood vessels near the surface of your skin. This usually settles but can be permanent.
- Bruising and swelling of your nose and under your eyes. This usually settles within 2 to 3 weeks. Sometimes the swelling can make it difficult for you to breathe through your nose.

## How soon will I recover?

### In hospital

After the operation you will be transferred to the recovery area and then to the ward. You should be able to go home the same day.

If you had some packing in your nose, it will usually be removed the next morning. You will feel a 'dragging' sensation as this is removed and you



may get a nosebleed for up to 15 minutes. Once this has settled you should be able to go home. However, your doctor may recommend that you stay a little longer.

If you had a graft, you may be given antibiotics to reduce the risk of infection. Your surgeon will discuss this with you.

If you are worried about anything, in hospital or at home, contact the healthcare team. They should be able to reassure you or identify and treat any complications.

## Returning to normal activities

If you had sedation or a general anaesthetic:

- a responsible adult should take you home in a car or taxi and stay with you for at least 24 hours;
- you should be near a telephone in case of an emergency;
- do not drive, operate machinery or do any potentially dangerous activities (this includes cooking) for at least 24 hours and not until you have fully recovered feeling, movement and co-ordination; and
- do not sign legal documents or drink alcohol for at least 24 hours.

To reduce the risk of a blood clot, make sure you carefully follow the instructions of the healthcare team if you have been given medication or need to wear special stockings.

You may need to use a nasal cleansing kit (nasal douche) to keep your nose clean. You may be given a course of antibiotics to reduce the risk of infection.

You will need to stay off work and away from groups of people for 2 weeks. This is to avoid catching a cold, which could result in an infection.

Your nose will feel blocked for up to 2 weeks and may release some bloodstained fluid. Do not blow your nose or sneeze for a few days. Gently wipe or dab any discharge with tissues. (To avoid sneezing, place your tongue in the roof of your mouth and suck hard.)

Your surgeon will remove the splint and strapping after a week. Most swelling and bruising will usually have settled after the third week.

Do not exercise, have a hot bath or bend down for 2 weeks. Sleep with extra pillows to keep your airways clear and to reduce any swelling.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Do not drive until you can control your vehicle, including in an emergency, and always check your insurance policy and with the healthcare team.

Ask your healthcare team if you need to do a Covid-19 test when you get home.

## The future

It can take many months for your nose to settle and for the final appearance to develop. If you feel you need revision surgery, wait at least 6 months while the structure of your nose stabilises before deciding to go ahead.

Most people make a good recovery and are satisfied with the new size and shape of their nose.

## Summary

A septorhinoplasty is an operation to improve the appearance of your nose and how you breathe. You should have realistic expectations about the results.

Surgery is usually safe and effective but complications can happen. You need to know about them to help you to make an informed decision about surgery. Knowing about them will also help to detect and treat any problems early.

[Keep this information document.](#) Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

[Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.](#)

[This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.](#)

Acknowledgements

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