

Going Home After Nasal Septal Surgery

This booklet offers information for your continued recovery. It also includes answers to many questions asked by people who have had this type of surgery.

After you go home, you may find it helpful to refer to this booklet. If you have any questions about any of the information in this booklet, please contact your surgeon and/or the nurse on the unit.

Physical Activity

Although recovery usually takes 3 to 6 weeks, each person gets better at his/her own rate. Many things affect the time it takes to feel fit again. Some of these are: how active people are before their surgery, the type and extent of surgery they had, their previous medical history and their age.

When you get home you may be surprised by how tired you feel. This is a normal feeling. Your energy level will improve over the next few weeks.

Why Exercise?

For the first 3 to 6 weeks after your surgery your body is in the process of healing.

A gradual increase of your activity will help you feel better. It will also help you heal faster and regain your confidence more quickly.



Guidelines to Help You Gradually Increase Your Activity

- Plan your day to allow time for both activity and rest.
- For the first few days at home, do the same amount of activity that you were doing in the hospital.
- Then begin walking daily. Start slowly with a comfortable distance (for example 1 block). As you are able, gradually increase how far you walk. Remember not to over extend your walk; the distance you walk is the distance you will need to walk back. Pace yourself.
- **For the next 3 to 6 weeks, avoid heavy lifting, pushing or pulling objects that weigh more than 10 pounds.** Such as: vacuuming, gardening, carrying groceries and even picking up children. Such activities can cause you to delay wound healing. Use your legs when you lift.
- Listen to your body. It will tell you when to stop what you are doing and when you are ready to do more. If you notice that you have increased pain, feel short of breath, or feel very tired during activity, stop and rest. You may have increased your activity level too fast. When you feel better, you can try again more slowly. **If you do not feel better or if you cannot increase your activity, please call your family doctor after 3 weeks.**

Rest and Relaxation

Rest is an important part of your recovery.

Guidelines to Help You Rest and Relax

- Alternate rest with exercise.
- Get at least eight hours of sleep every night (if possible).
- Plan two 30 to 60 minute rest periods each day during the first week at home. These can be naps or just relaxing times.



Guidelines for your Activity

You may:

- Be driven in a car anytime.
- Drive your own car when you are able to shoulder check and you stop taking pain medications, which can make you drowsy. It is okay to drive if you are taking plain Tylenol or a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID). **Do not take Aspirin**
- Fly in an airplane anytime.
- Shower or bathe anytime in warm or lukewarm (not hot) water, **but keep the nasal bandage dry.** Soaking the bandage in the tub or having water spray onto it may damage the healing skin, move the bandage out of position and increase the risk of infection.
- Start exercise routine (gym, weights) in 3 to 6 weeks.
- Start sports (golf, tennis, running etc.) in 3 to 6 weeks.

- **Go back to work:** the amount of time it takes for one to recover depends on your health and type of surgery performed. Most people are able to return to work in 3 to 4 weeks and others return in 6 to 8 weeks. If you are unsure, ask your family doctor or ask your surgeon during your follow-up appointment.
- **Sexual activity** uses the same amount of energy as climbing up two flights of stairs at a normal pace. Ideally, when you can climb 2 flights of stairs without getting tired and short of breath, you can return to your normal sexual activity.

Other:

- **Avoid** hitting (trauma) to the nose.
- **Avoid** activities such as saunas and hot tubs that cause you to get very hot (ie. red face, sweating) for at least 2 weeks as it can increase the chance of bleeding.

Incision Care

Things to expect and do:

- Expect **nasal congestion** (the nose to feel plugged) for several weeks
- Expect some **bleeding** from the nose (it will gradually decrease). The nasal bandage (mustache dressing) will collect blood and should be changed only when saturated. It is not unusual to change the dressing every hour for the first 24 hours. After the first few days, you may not even need a dressing.
- Some surgeons will use **nasal packing or nasal bandage** and these will be removed at the time of your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.
- You can **gently bathe or shower** in warm or lukewarm (**not hot**) water, but keep the nasal bandage dry. Soaking the bandage in the tub or having water spray onto it may damage the healing skin, move the bandage out of position and increase the risk of infection.
- You may **wash your hair** the day after you go home, lean your head back rather than forward to keep the bandage dry. Use a cool setting for your hair dryer.
- **Apply polysporin** ointment into the nostrils 3 to 4 times a day for at least 3 weeks. This will prevent and soften nasal crust formation. Allow the crusting to fall off naturally; **do not** pick at it.
- **Sneeze** with your mouth wide open to relieve pressure. **Do not** blow your nose for 10 days after surgery. If your nose is blocked, sniff gently to clear the passages.
- **Avoid** coughing or clearing your throat too forcefully.



- You may have some **swelling** around the nose, upper lip, cheeks and around the eyes for several days after surgery. **Apply covered ice packs** over the eyes or nose bridge for the first 1 to 2 days to help reduce swelling and soothe the eyes.

Note: Slight numbness, swelling, tingling, bumpiness, firmness and discoloration around the incision site are normal findings after surgery. They will improve with time. If they persist with no improvement, inform your surgeon and/or family doctor.

- **Sleep on your back and keep your head raised on two pillows for 10 days.** Keeping your head elevated above the heart can reduce the build-up of fluid and the amount of swelling.

Discharge Criteria



Each person recovers differently from the type of surgery they had performed or due to other pre-existing medical conditions. Therefore, the length of hospital stay is different for each patient. Prior to sending you home, your surgeon will make sure your:

- blood work is within the normal range or coming down towards the normal range
- temperature is within the normal range
- incision is healing
- eating safely, not necessarily the way you were eating prior to coming into hospital
- walking safely, not necessarily the way you were walking prior to coming into hospital
- able to manage at home (with or without community/family supports)

Follow-up Appointment



You can (optional) call and make an appointment to see your family doctor within a few days after going home. This will allow your family doctor to review your post-operative baseline and general health status. If you happen to come across any complications, at least your family doctor has a baseline to compare you with.

You must call your surgeon's office to make a follow-up appointment. During this appointment, your surgeon will review your overall recovery progress, inform you of the results of the pathology report and tell you if any further treatment is required.



Please Contact your Surgeon or Family Doctor if you notice:

- Chills, fever, a temperature over 38.5°C (100.5°F) for 2 straight readings, 4 hours apart, when measured by mouth.
- Your prescribed pain medication is not relieving your pain.
- Increased redness, swelling or foul pus drainage from the incision.
- Constant bleeding from the incision (enough to soak a tissue or handkerchief).
- Nausea and/or vomiting that lasts beyond 24 hours.
- The nasal packing has fallen out or nasal bandage has moved/come off.
- Difficulties with swallowing resulting in decreased appetite and constant weight loss.
- If you experience any pain, aching or redness in your calves or swelling of the legs, go to the nearest emergency room.

Note: If you cannot get a hold of your surgeon or family doctor, you need to contact another doctor (walk-in clinic or emergency department).

If you do come to the emergency department, it would be helpful to inform the nurse and physician that you recently had surgery, and the name of your surgeon.

