

RHINOPLASTY

If you are considering surgery we want you to be thoroughly informed about this procedure. Reading this information is the first step. However, a personal consultation with your surgeon is the best way to obtain any additional information you need.

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WHAT IS RHINOPLASTY?

Rhinoplasty is an operation designed to change the appearance of your nose. There are several components to your nasal shape that you may wish altered in some way, such as the profile from the side view, the length or width, or the shape of the tip. Rhinoplasty, can improve the shape, size and general appearance of your nose. The goal is a nose that looks natural and achieves a harmonious balance with your other facial features.

The changes you wish to achieve may require altering the bones and cartilages that make up the bones, the lining of the nasal passageways or even the skin covering. It is important to be clear about the changes you want and to agree with your surgeon on realistic goals before surgery.

IS RHINOPLASTY FOR ME?

Assuming you are in good health, there is no upper age limit for having your nose reshaped. Rhinoplasty can alter the nasal profile, change the angle between the nose and upper lip and reshape the nasal tip. Alterations can be made to decrease the nasal bridge and reduce the size of the nose. The results of rhinoplasty enhance the balance between the nose and other facial features.

Sometimes certain breathing problems related to the internal nasal structures can be corrected at the same time as nose reshaping is performed. Your plastic surgeon will be able to help you determine whether these structures should be modified along with reshaping your nose.

Any of the following conditions may make you a good candidate for rhinoplasty:

- You have a hump on the nasal bridge seen from profile.
- Your nasal bridge is too low.
- Your nose looks too wide seen from the front.
- Your nose looks too small or too large for your face.

- The nasal tip droops.
- The nasal tip is thickened or enlarged.
- Your nostrils are excessively flared.
- Your nose is off-centre or crooked.
- Previous injury has made your nose asymmetrical.
- You have breathing difficulty because of previous injury.

INITIAL CONSULTATION

It is important that you have a clear idea of how you would like your nose to look and, at the same time, realise that there are limitations to the procedure. During the initial consultation, you may be asked to point out exactly what you would like to see improved. This will help your plastic surgeon to understand your expectations and determine whether they can be realistically achieved.

You will be asked about your medical history including previous operations, past and present medical conditions and current medications. In order to provide you with the best information and safest options, it is important that you give your surgeon complete information. The medical conditions that may increase risks of surgery include high blood pressure, thyroid problems, diabetes and bleeding problems.

Your plastic surgeon may also ask whether you have difficulty breathing through your nose, suffer from allergies that may cause nasal stuffiness, or are a chronic user of nasal sprays.

Your plastic surgeon will examine your internal nasal structures. Your skin quality as well as the size and shape of your nose and its relationship to your other facial features will be carefully studied.

Preoperative photographs may be taken during your initial consultation or a subsequent visit. Your surgeon will discuss the details of the operation with you and the possible risks and complications associated with the procedure.

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DOES MEDICARE AND PRIVATE INSURANCE COVER RHINOPLASTY?

While most insurance plans will not pay for aesthetic nose reshaping, they frequently will cover surgery performed on the internal structures of the nose to improve breathing problems. Medicare and private funds also cover nasal deformities from trauma or birth defects. Your plastic surgeon can discuss this with you at the time of your consultation.

PREPARATION FOR SURGERY

The goal of your plastic surgeon and the staff is to make your surgical experience as easy and comfortable for you as possible.

Smokers will be asked to stop smoking 3 weeks before surgery as nicotine in cigarette smoke interferes with blood circulation. Aspirin and some anti-inflammatory drugs used for the treatment of arthritis can cause bleeding, so you should avoid taking these medications for 2 weeks before surgery.

Rhinoplasty may be performed on an outpatient basis. If this is the case, make certain you have someone to drive you home after surgery and to stay with you at least the first night following surgery.

THE DAY OF SURGERY

Your surgeon may mark your skin before the operation and if you have not already done so, you will need to sign the consent form for your operation. Your operation may be performed in a hospital or in a day surgery facility depending on the extent of the operation you need.

Medications are administered for your comfort during the surgical procedure. During the anaesthetic, various monitors are used to check your heart, blood pressure, pulse and the amount of oxygen circulating in your blood.

YOUR OPERATION

Because of individual factors, not everyone will achieve the same results from rhinoplasty. Your plastic surgeon will select the surgical technique that he or she feels will obtain the best outcome for you.

The operation is usually performed in a hospital under general anaesthetic. Usually rhinoplasty involves an overnight stay in hospital. It is possible

for the surgery to be done on a day surgery basis if you wish. You may experience some discomfort over the next 2-3 days. Pain relief will be prescribed for this time.

In most instances, all of the incisions will be placed inside your nose, so they will not be visible from the outside. However, it may be necessary to place a small external incision across the vertical strip of tissue that separates the nostrils, called the columella if your surgeon feels this offers the best way of correcting your problem. This technique is called an "open rhinoplasty." Whatever incisions are used to reshape your nose, they will ultimately be very inconspicuous.

Alterations may be made to increase or decrease the height of the nasal bridge, reduce the width of the nose, narrow the nostrils, change the angle between the nose and upper lip, or reshape the tip. If the base of the nose is narrowed or the nostrils reduced, small wedges of skin at the base of the nostrils may be removed. Through the small incisions described previously, work is done on the cartilage and bone that form the framework of your nose. Sometimes, the position of nasal bones may need to be changed to make your nose look narrower and straighter. If your nose needs to be built up in some areas, this can be done using nasal cartilage, or perhaps bone or cartilage from another site. The skin and soft tissues then re-drape themselves over this new scaffolding.

Your Surgeon will work out the exact procedures prior to the operation.

HOW LONG DOES THE OPERATION TAKE?

The operation takes from 1 to 2 hours, depending on the extent of each case.

AFTER SURGERY

When surgery is completed, you will be taken into a recovery area where you will continue to be closely monitored.

HOW WILL I LOOK AND FEEL INITIALLY?

It is important to understand that recovery time varies greatly among individuals.

After the operation, there will be packs in both your nostrils and a splint or plaster on your nose. Your nose will feel stuffy and there will be

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swelling and bruising around your eyes. Minor oozing is not uncommon and the nasal packs used overnight following the procedure are intended to control this. Generally, bruising around the eyes and cheeks is most apparent during the first three days following surgery.

In the first week after surgery, you should restrict your activities and sleep with your head elevated. Also, make certain you do not bend, strain or lift anything heavy. This will help to minimise swelling and reduce the possibility of minor bleeding, which is not uncommon. Remember, you must not take aspirin or certain anti-inflammatory medications as these increase the likelihood of bleeding.

If packing was used, it will either dissolve by itself or be removed three to seven days after surgery. Stitches may also be removed at that time. You may need to continue wearing the nasal splint for up to a week.

Most discolourations will disappear within a week. A few days after surgery, you can begin to use makeup as a concealer, if desired. Although most of the swelling subsides in 4-6 weeks, there continues to be some swelling that may take six months or longer to subside. Swelling inside the nose can persist for several weeks and cause nasal stuffiness.

WHEN CAN I RESUME MY NORMAL ACTIVITIES?

Generally speaking you will be able to engage in social contact by the second week following surgery. It is important for you not to over-exert during the healing period to prevent bleeding which may require repacking of the nose.

In many instances, you may be able to return to work within a week or ten days after surgery, depending on the extent of surgery and your occupation. Walking can be resumed immediately after surgery and most other normal activities including exercise can usually be resumed within three weeks.

Your nose will be sensitive to sunlight for several months and you must be conscientious about using a sunblock to protect your skin.

RESULTS OF YOUR SURGERY

Since the healing process is gradual, you should

expect to wait several months to get an accurate picture of the results of your nose surgery. External incisions, if any, will fade over a number of months until they become barely visible.

The goal of rhinoplasty is a nose that looks natural and blends harmoniously with your other facial features. You are likely to begin enjoying your new look within weeks of your surgery. Occasionally, a touch-up may be desired to further improve the results. If this is the case, the additional procedure is usually less extensive than the original operation.

In most instances, the results of rhinoplasty are permanent, except for possible changes associated with the normal ageing process.

RISKS AND POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF SURGERY

Fortunately, significant complications from rhinoplasty are infrequent. Every year, many thousands of operations are performed with no major problems and good results. However, there are potential problems and risks inherent to the procedure you need to understand before proceeding with your surgery.

- **Anaesthetic:** You will be receiving a general anaesthetic and your anaesthetist will be discussing with you possible risks associated with anaesthesia. Anaesthesia today is very safe and the chance of any problem is very low. Any questions you have regarding your anaesthetic would be best answered by your anaesthetist at the time of surgery.
- **Bleeding:** Bleeding is the most likely problem that may occur after rhinoplasty. It can be problematical in about 20% of cases. It is most likely to occur immediately following surgery or the same evening. It is possible in cases of persistent problematical bleeding that return to the operating theatre will be required.
- **Infection:** Infection following rhinoplasty is very uncommon due to the excellent healing qualities of the face. If infection does occur, it will become evident within one week of surgery and may require treatment with antibiotics.

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This may delay the healing process or result in the development of scar tissue.

- **Scarring:** Incisions or cuts used to perform the surgery are designed to be unnoticeable. The incisions can be either completely internal or may involve a small cut through the base of the nose. The scars, both internal and external may heal unpredictably and become thickened and unsightly. In the unlikely event of this occurring, additional measures such as injections or revisional surgery may be necessary.

- Unpredictable scarring within the nasal passages may produce “webs” that may restrict the nasal opening.

- **Nasal shape:** Swelling of the nose can affect nasal contour for some months and during this period of settling, improvement in nasal shape can be expected.

- It is likely that close scrutiny of your new nasal shape may reveal some small irregularity in contour or symmetry of the dorsum of the nose or the tip. Many will improve with time but if they cause concern, surgical correction is usually possible.

- If the operation involves repositioning of the septum (the partition between the nostrils), perforation of the septum is possible. This usually causes no problems, but in some cases it may result in “whistling” during breathing or unpleasant crusting. If necessary, perforations of the septum can be corrected surgically.

- **Breathing:** The nose is part of the airway by which air enters the body during breathing. By manipulating the nose shape it is possible the nasal air passageway can be altered. You may notice nasal congestion and some restriction to airflow through the nose, particularly in the early post-operative months. This can be expected to resolve as swelling settles.

- You may temporarily experience a diminished sense of smell.

- **Sensation:** The tip of the nose often feels numb for some months but this is quite normal and usually recovers completely. In the first few weeks there may be a feeling of stiffness or numbness in the upper lip. This is because swelling in the nose can affect the movement of the lip. As with all other changes due to this swelling process, it is quite transient. The lip or a front tooth may be numb temporarily.

The subject of risks and potential complications of surgery is best discussed on a personal basis between you and your plastic surgeon. You can help to minimise certain risks by following the advice and instructions of your plastic surgeon, both before and after your surgery.

It is important to keep in mind that improvement in appearance rather than perfection is the goal of surgery.

MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON

Should there be any questions regarding Rhinoplasty be sure they are answered in advance. Well-meaning friends are not a good source of information. Find out everything before proceeding with the operation - a well-informed patient is a happy one.

After surgery, you will return to your plastic surgeon's office for follow-up care at prescribed intervals, at which time your progress can be evaluated. Post-operative photographs will form a part of the evaluation of your result. Once the immediate postoperative follow-up is complete, many surgeons encourage their patients to come back for periodic check-ups to observe and discuss the long-term results of surgery.

Please remember that the relationship with your plastic surgeon does not end when you leave the operating room. If you have questions or concerns during your recovery, or need additional information at a later time, you should contact your surgeon.