

Patient Advice Sheet on Fractured Nasal Bones
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What is broken in my nose?

The nasal bones. Sometimes the septal cartilage is broken too. The nasal bones support the upper part of your nose. The septal cartilage supports the lower part. It also divides your nasal passages in two.

Why do I need the operation?

Only if the nose is bent now and wasn't before the injury. If it is broken but straight it will heal naturally.

Do I need an Xray?

No, it doesn't help. It can miss fractures. It can seem to show fractures which aren't there. If your nose has been bent, it has been broken

Do I have to have this operation?

No. It is your choice. We call this elective.

What symptoms will be better?

Your nose will be straighter and perhaps clearer if your septum's broken too.

What are the alternatives?

To do nothing. Your nose will stay bent. Further treatment is possible. You would have to wait a year. The operation is more complex.

Are there any problems resetting a broken nose?

Not usually.

What is the longterm outlook after the operation?

Good if your nose straightens nicely and you take care of it for four weeks. Some deformity can come back in the healing process. Sometimes a simple reset does not straighten the nose properly. We cannot guarantee the result. Sometimes people have had fractures before. Sometimes they think a recent blow has broken their nose when it was an old one. We cannot reduce old fractures. A different treatment is possible. You would have to wait a year. The operation is more complex.

What will my nose feel like afterwards?

It may be a little numb for a while. It may be a little tender or blocked.

What will my nose look like afterwards?

Much as it did just before the operation but straighter.

Can anything serious happen?

Serious complications are uncommon. All operations and anaesthetics have risks. Some are serious. The risks are similar to those of everyday life. Examples are flying on holiday; driving in a car or walking down a street.

Why do I have to have the operation between one and three weeks after the injury?

We wait a week or so for swelling to go down. Then we can see what we are doing. The operation needs to be done within 2-3 weeks of the injury. After 3 weeks the bone may be too well healed to shift.

Will I be asleep?

Usually you are. This is called general anaesthesia. We can do it under local anaesthesia also. We use sprays and injections to "freeze" the nose inside. The doctor who makes you go

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to sleep is called an anaesthetist. He or she will tell you about your anaesthetic.

How is the operation done?

You have a short anaesthetic. We use our hands to click the nose straight.

Will there be anything in my nose afterwards? For how long?

Not usually. Your nose may need a pack to stop bleeding. It stays in for 2 hours up to overnight.

Will there be a splint? How long is it on for?

Not usually. If one is used it stays on a week. We try not to use plaster nowadays.

When can I go home?

The same day usually.

What must I do afterwards?

Avoid any chance of a further nasal injury for at least 4 weeks.

What am I allowed to do afterwards if I want?

Any normal light activity such as a gentle stroll is OK.

What do I do if any serious bleeding occurs?

- Blow each nostril clear one at a time.
- Hold your head forward.
- Squeeze the lower fleshy part of the nostrils firmly closed. Use your thumb and first finger.
- Use a watch and time at least ten minutes.
- Put ice in a plastic bag. Add a little water.
- Put the ice pack on the bridge of your nose and your forehead.
- If the bleeding is still going after half an hour, call us.

When can I go back to work?

A full day after the anaesthetic if your work is light. Two weeks if it is not. Four weeks if your work involves a risk of further injury.

When will you need to look at my nose again?

If it is straight we don't. If you don't like how it looks, phone for an appointment.

What if my septum is broken too?

You need an operation called a septoplasty. If we are sure this is needed we do it at the same time. This is called a "hot" septoplasty. There is another advice sheet for this operation.

What if it doesn't go straight when you push it?

We may need to use a forceps to grasp the nose. We may need to use one if your fracture is unusual. If we do it is more likely that you will have a nasal pack. It is more likely you will need a splint. It is a little more likely that you will have a nose bleed.

May I ask a question?

At any time. You can also refuse to have the operation at any time. If you ask a question please ask someone suitable. A junior doctor or nurse may not know what you want to know. Please do not ask several doctors the same question and compare answers.