Intermountain® Healthcare

Nose and Sinus Surgery: *Discharge instructions*

This handout explains how to care for yourself when you get home. **If your healthcare providers tell you something different, follow what they say.**

What should I expect after surgery?

- **Your face will be sore** in the area of the surgery. You may also feel some pain in your upper teeth and the roof of your mouth.
- **If you had rhinoplasty, you may have some bruising and swelling** around the eyes. (Some patients get black eyes.)
- **Your nose may feel stuffy and uncomfortable** until the swelling goes down. This could take up to two weeks after surgery.
- **You will have a runny nose.** This is drainage from the surgery. It will be bloody at first, but will turn clear and lessen as you heal.
- **Your nose may be packed with a sponge or gauze** for the first day after surgery. If your nose is packed, you will need to breathe through your mouth. Your mouth may get dry.
- **You may have splints or tubes** on the inside or outside of your nose. The surgeon will remove them about a week after surgery.

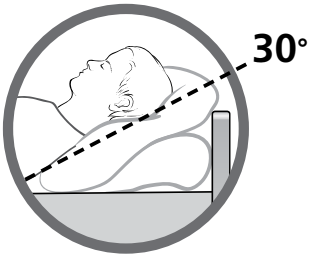
When to call your doctor

Contact your doctor right away if you have:

- Change in vision
- Fever over 101°F
- Chills, a cough, weakness
- After the first day, blood soaking a gauze pad more often than once every 30 minutes
- Pain that is not controlled by pain medicine
- Continued nausea or vomiting

How do I care for myself at home?

The first 24 hours



- **Stay on the couch or in bed.** Don't be too active. Put pillows or cushions under your head to keep your head raised. Sleep with your head elevated to about 30 degrees.
- **Manage bleeding.** You may bleed from your nose and it may run down the back of your throat. If you feel blood draining down the back of your throat, spit it out. If you swallow it, you may become sick to your stomach.
  - Continue to rest and use gauze pads as directed to absorb the blood.
  - You may soak through a gauze pad every half hour at first, but this should reduce after the first day (24 hours).
- **Do not blow your nose.** If there are blood clots at the end of your nose, wipe them gently with a damp cloth. Don't put anything in your nose unless your doctor tells you to. If you have to sneeze, do it with your mouth open. Ask your healthcare provider how to do this safely.
- **Drink clear liquids.** This will help control stomach upset. Examples include water, apple juice, white grape juice, broth, soda, sports drinks, coffee or tea without milk, and plain gelatin. When you are doing well with clear liquids, slowly add other liquids and foods that are easy to digest.
- **Take your pain medicines exactly as your doctor tells you to.** Take them with broth or food to prevent stomach upset.

The first weeks after surgery

You may have one or more of these side effects the first weeks after surgery:

- Tenderness on the inside or outside of your nose
- Tenderness in your upper teeth and the roof of your mouth
- More headaches than usual
- Earaches in one or both ears

Caring for your nose

- **Don't blow your nose.** You may sniff gently.
- **Use a vaporizer or humidifier.** This adds moisture to the air and helps thin the liquid in your nose. Wash the humidifier every day with warm water and soap to keep it free of germs.
- **Wash your hands often,** especially when you've been around someone who is sick. This will help prevent the spread of germs.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking will irritate your nose and slow your healing. If you smoke, this is a good time to try to quit. Ask your healthcare provider about ways to help you quit.
- **If you had rhinoplasty:**
  - **Do not get the dressing on the top of your nose wet.** Keeping your bandages dry prevents infection and speeds healing.
  - **Keep your dressings on** (unless your healthcare provider says it's okay to take them off). Your dressings keep your nose in the correct position for healing and protect your nose from injury.

Activity

- **Take it easy.** Don't do any heavy lifting or vigorous exercise for 2 weeks.
- **Do not fly in an airplane** or do any travel with fast elevation changes until your doctor says it's okay.

Medicines

After your nose or sinus surgery, your surgeon will prescribe medicines to help you heal.

Your medicines may include:

- **Antibiotics.** These help prevent infections caused by bacteria. Always take antibiotics exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Keep taking them until they're completely gone.
- **Pain medicine.** These will help control or decrease your pain. They will not take away your pain completely. Only take pain medicines as prescribed by your doctor. This will keep your pain from getting worse and make it easier to manage. In a few days, your pain should lessen and you can wait longer between doses. If you have severe pain, even after taking your pain medicine, tell your doctor right away.

Follow-up visit

Ask your healthcare providers when you should come back for a follow-up visit. Most patients visit their doctor within a week of surgery.

Your follow-up appointment is:

When: _____

Where: _____

Additional instructions:

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