

Rhinoplasty

Introduction

Any plastic surgery operation is a very personal choice and understandably there are a number of questions that naturally arise. This leaflet has been produced by Plastic Surgery Partners' consultants as a helpful introduction if you are considering surgery.

Background

Changing the shape or reducing the size of the nose (Rhinoplasty) is a common operation and was one of the first cosmetic procedures performed at the turn of the last century. Many of the early surgeons were European. Nowadays an experienced surgeon specialising in nasal surgery should be able to produce predictable results. It is, however, extremely delicate surgery where millimetres count and nowhere more is the surgeon's skill put to the test nor are the results more obvious.

Many of the Rhinoplasties we perform at Plastic Surgery Partners have already had surgery somewhere else, sometimes several operations. So-called secondary Rhinoplasty is far more difficult, takes longer and the results, because of previous scarring, are less predictable. We are recommended by patients, because of our experience in this type of surgery, from many parts of the world.

The aim of a good Rhinoplasty is to provide a harmoniously shaped nose with regards to the other features of the face, with an un-operated look which does not draw attention to itself. It should be undertaken in such a way that there are minimal complications and time off work.

Your pre-operative consultation and follow up care will be undertaken in the Channel Islands, in either Jersey or Guernsey. Your surgery will be in London at the Fitzroy Hospital.

Consultation

At the first consultation you will be asked what exactly you feel is wrong. Your face will be evaluated to see if it is symmetrical, to determine whether you have a blocked nose or if there is a problem with the airway. The inside of the nose will be examined to look at the septum which is often bent and then we look at the bone and cartilage which form the external shape.

Sometimes the chin is too long or too small compared with the nose and you may be advised how it could be altered. Sometimes the nose is very damaged and building blocks of cartilage or bone may be required from other parts of the body.

Computer Imaging

By using computer imaging it will be possible to discuss with you the practicalities of what can, and cannot, be sensibly achieved. Remember the computer is not, and can never be, an exact picture of how your nose will be, as unfortunately scarring and the thickness of the skin of the nose will be ultimately decide how things turn out. However, the computer imaging will allow a discussion with you on what you mean by the top or the side of the nose and give us both an idea of how we should try and change things.

Operation

Closed – Many plastic surgeons only perform surgery on the nose by making their incisions inside the nostrils (endonasal). In straightforward operations such as removing a bump or straightening, it is usual to perform the operation endonasally.

Open – However, an open procedure will be undertaken in more complicated cases, particularly if the tip is to be altered. A small incision will be made across the base of the nose on the columella, which is the vertical strip of tissue separating the nostrils (external). This scar is barely visible.

The operation of Rhinoplasty usually takes between one and two hours depending on whether any added procedures are being performed such as an operation to improve the breathing or if at consultation it has been decided that further procedures on your face such as to the chin are required.

Surgery is undertaken under general anaesthetic with a one night stay in hospital.

After the Surgery

After the operation you will experience significant bruising and swelling around your eyes. This is normal and you should not worry. Any external stitches are removed at 5-6 days and frequently the plaster is removed at about 10 days after surgery.

Usually about two weeks is required before you return to work, at which time there should be little to give away that you have had an operation. Any bruising at this time can be disguised by cosmetic camouflage.

In general the fewer people that you discuss your operation with the better, but I strongly suggest that you discuss it with one close friend, who may well understand how you feel about your nose. It is interesting that the members of your family who have known you for many years will usually advise against alteration. If you have any doubts or queries then please arrange a second consultation. We do not charge extra for this and it allows us to again go over your pre-operative photographs and to answer any of your questions.

Pre-Operative Preparation

Before your operation you should note that smoking undoubtedly leads to more swelling around the eyes and to more problems with the anaesthetic. Please let us know about any medication you take, no matter how infrequently. Aspirin, which is contained in many medicines e.g. Alka-Seltzer and Nurofen, should not be taken for two weeks pre-operatively.

I recommend that patients take Arnica for 7 days pre-operatively and 7 days post-operatively as this will help with your post-operative bruising.

If you are travelling from the Channel Islands you will be given a morning slot if you travel over the night before or an afternoon slot if you come over on the morning of surgery. You should have nothing to eat or drink for 6 hours before your proposed surgery time.

You will be given the details of admission by one of the team. If your operation is in the morning you will be asked to have nothing to eat or drink from midnight the night before and if it is in the afternoon you should just have a light breakfast and nothing to eat or drink after 7.00am. You should be fit to fly home the following day. You will be discharged in the morning and should book an afternoon flight home. You will be given a letter confirming your fitness to fly.

Post-Operative Care

When the surgery is completed a splint is applied to your nose which will maintain its new shape. I rarely use nasal packs except when I have undertaken septal surgery. You will be left with a little bib across your nose which can be removed the following day. You should insert nothing, especially Q tips, up your nose for at least three weeks. Please leave the surgery to me!

Once you are around from the anaesthetic we will sit you up with your shoulders being supported on three to four pillows as this helps to reduce the swelling around the eyes.

At the same time you may be given ice packs to apply to the eyes. As and when you go home you should try and sleep upright for at least a week.

Operations on the nose are not painful which surprises most people. You will have discomfort if packs are placed in the nose. This is the same discomfort you get from a blocked nose with a cold. On discharge from hospital get someone to take you home and stay with you for at least a further night. An appointment will be given for you to reattend four or five days after surgery if you are to have stitches removed and ten days after surgery for removal of the plaster.

For the first few days after surgery try and avoid sneezing vigorously, very hot baths, hot spicy food, alcohol and strenuous exercise. You will have bruising around the eyes which is more marked if you are a heavy smoker and sometimes swelling in the upper lip. Usually the swelling reaches its peak two days after surgery and then subsides. When the plaster is removed at ten days all visible swelling will usually have disappeared, but there will be a feeling of numbness and stiffness in the tip of the nose which means that some swelling persists.

It will take the swelling several months to subside completely but it will not be visible to anyone else but you. In patients with thick, oily skins or secondary surgery the swelling is slower to resolve. While many patients want to see the final result immediately upon removal of the plaster, the presence of early swelling can be misleading and a premature judgement should not be made. At this stage your hair can now be washed and it is now safe to blow your nose and clean the rim gently with cotton wool and salt water.

The nose will be delicate for some weeks and potential harmful activity such as contact sport should be avoided for this period as well. You may start gentle exercise such as jogging or yoga at 3-4 weeks! More strenuous exercise such as aerobic classes, swimming and tennis should be avoided for 6 weeks.

Glasses can be worn while the cast is on and after it is removed they can still be worn but they should not rest on the nose. Contact lenses can be worn as soon as the swelling goes down from around the eyes and allows easy insertion and removal.

It is common for relatives and friends not to comment on any difference after a nasal operation. Do not consider such a reaction as an indication of failure, on the contrary if it looks better and natural it will go unnoticed. The intention is after all to create a new nose that draws little attention to itself and that blends into the overall features of your face in proper proportions.

Long Term Results

Complications are fortunately rare. If you follow the advice given, the most common is swelling around the nose which settles on its own and we will show you some massage exercises. Occasionally the dark colour of bruising takes longer to disappear especially in darker skinned people. Nose bleeds and infections are all possible complications but extremely rare and easily corrected if early treatment is obtained.

Should a nosebleed occur, then the first aid treatment is to sit with the head held up and backwards and plug the nostrils with some lint. If there are any problems please get in touch with a member of Plastic Surgery Partners or the hospital.

Very occasionally, in about one in fifteen cases, a small secondary adjustment will be required. Almost always this can be undertaken under local anaesthetic, but it is difficult for the patient to understand that all the scarring on the nose must be allowed to mature and soften before this can be safely undertaken. This means at least one year.

Hopefully this information will give you a better understanding about nasal surgery. I am sure it will not answer all your questions, but it will help us during our further discussions.

If there are any problems or anxieties post-operatively, please get in touch with The HealthXchange Clinic on 01481 736699 or out of office hours Dr J G Curran 01481 265797 or mobile 07781 165797.