Septoplasty

What is septoplasty

Septoplasty straightens the nasal septum, the wall of cartilage and bone between the nostrils. It mainly treats blockage caused by a bent septum. It does not treat every cause of nasal blockage and is not a reliable cure for snoring or sleep apnoea.

Why might I need a septoplasty

You may be offered a septoplasty if you have:

- Persistent nasal blockage on one or both sides.
- Difficulty breathing through your nose.
- Selected problems such as recurrent nosebleeds, or to allow access for another nasal operation, after specialist assessment.
- Snoring or sleep disruption due to nasal obstruction.
- A deviated septum after injury or trauma.

The procedure

- Septoplasty is usually performed under general anaesthetic (you will be asleep).
- The surgeon works through the nostrils – there are no external cuts.
- The bent parts of cartilage or bone are straightened or removed.
- Sometimes soft plastic splints are placed inside the nose to support healing.
- The operation typically takes 30–60 minutes.

Recovery

- You may go home the same day or stay overnight.
- A blocked nose can last several weeks while swelling settles. Mild discomfort and blood-stained discharge are common early on.
- Avoid blowing your nose for at least a week.
- Sleep with your head elevated to reduce swelling.
- Most people return to normal activities after 1–2 weeks.
- Avoid strenuous activity, dusty environments, and smoking during recovery.

Risks and complications

All surgeries carry some risk. Possible complications include:

- Bleeding.
- Infection.
- Persistent nasal obstruction.
- Changes to the shape of the nose (rare).
- Septal perforation (a hole in the septum, rare).
- A change in smell, numbness of the upper teeth or lip, or scar tissue inside the nose. Some problems can persist.

Aftercare

- You may be prescribed nasal drops or sprays to aid healing.
- Attend your follow-up appointments to check healing.
- Avoid contact sports or activities that could injure your nose for several weeks.

When to seek medical help

Seek urgent advice for increasing nasal pain and blockage, fever or swelling, as a collection of blood or infection in the septum may need treatment.

Get urgent hospital help for heavy or persistent bleeding or new visual changes. Call 999 for major bleeding, collapse or severe breathing difficulty.

About this information

This leaflet explains the condition and common treatment choices. Your care team will advise what is suitable for you. If you have an operation, follow the specific preparation and aftercare instructions provided by your hospital.

Further information

Dorset County Hospital septoplasty