Care After Your Nasal or Sinus Surgery

For the next 24 hours
• Do not drive, or operate heavy or potentially harmful equipment.
• Do not drink alcohol, including beer.
• Do not make legal decisions or sign important papers.

Activity
• You may feel sleepy for up to 24 hours from the medication you had.
• Do not bend forward with your head. Instead, squat at the knees to pick up objects.
• Do not return to work until you have seen your doctor for a follow-up visit.
• Slowly increase your activity – walking, climbing stairs or doing light housework. Avoid strenuous activity until your doctor approves it.
• Do not lift anything more than 10 pounds.
• You may shower or take a tub bath.

Diet
• Nausea is normal for the first 24 to 48 hours. Start eating a bland diet (toast, hot cereal, crackers, sherbet, broth soup).
• Drink plenty of fluids (6 to 8 glasses of water).
• Resume your regular diet as told.

Medications
• Use pain medicine as told. You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol), but not more than the recommended amount in 24 hours. (Your prescription may contain acetaminophen, so ask your pharmacist how much more you can take.)
• You may have a prescription for antibiotics. Take these as told by your doctor.
• Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) for 2 weeks – they can increase bleeding.
• For bleeding or congestion, use Afrin nasal spray every 4 hours as needed during the next 3 to 4 days. To use, put 1 to 2 sprays into the affected nostril.

Irrigation sprays
After surgery, you may need to irrigate your nose as told by your doctor. The following irrigations may be used:
• After septum and turbinate surgery
  – Use nasal saline solution spray 3 times a day to prevent the nose from drying out.
  – To use, put 2 sprays into your nostrils and spit out or let it run back out the nose.
Irrigation sprays, continued

• After sinus surgery
  – You will be told when to begin to irrigate your nose. When you start, you will need to use a saline irrigation.
  – Prepare a salt solution using 1 teaspoon of salt to 8 ounces warm water (body temperature warm).
  • You may use bottled water or city water.
  • If you have well water, you need to boil the water first and let cool to body temperature before use.
  – Lean over the sink and gently irrigate the saline into your nose using a small bulb syringe. Do this 2 to 3 times a day to clear the crusts. This will feel strange and some fluid may come out of your mouth.
  – When finished, apply antibiotic ointment to each nostril rim using a cotton swab.
  – It is very important to not allow crusting to occur in your sinuses because your doctor will look in your nose with a scope 2 to 3 weeks after surgery.

After sinus ballooning surgery only

• You can expect little crusting or bleeding.
• You may have a burning feeling in the face or nose. This is common and will go away with time.
• You may return to work or school sooner without restrictions if you only had sinus balloon surgery. If you had other procedures done with the sinus balloon, your doctor will let you know when you can return to work or school.

Care of your wound

• Keep your head elevated as much as you can to decrease swelling.
• Do not blow your nose for 1 week after surgery. If you need to sneeze, do so through an open mouth to avoid pressure in the nose.
• You may have drainage for a few days after surgery. It will look bloody at first but then will turn pink after a few days. Gently wipe the drainage from under the nose – do not wipe the nose itself or move the tip of your nose. If you have frequent drainage, your nurse can show you how to use a nasal sling.
• If active bleeding starts: Pinch your nose, lean forward and hold for 5 minutes. If your bleeding has not stopped after doing this, call your doctor.
• Any numbness in your nose or teeth usually goes away in 1 to 3 months.
• Being out in the cold during the first year after surgery may cause temporary swelling or congestion in your nose. This usually goes away when you enter a warm environment.
• Do not be alarmed if you have trouble breathing through your nose for 3 weeks after surgery. This is common and will improve with time.

Call your doctor if you have:

• Signs of infection, such as yellow or green foul-smelling drainage from your nose, or increased redness or swelling of your nose
• A fever over 101.5° F
• Pain that is not relieved with your pain medicine
• Any other questions or concerns