

Laurence Kirwan, MD, FRCS, FACS
Plastic Surgeon
Information On Rhinoplasty (Corrective Nasal Surgery)

Rhinoplasty is the name of the operation to alter the shape of the nose. Its main purpose is to improve the appearance and, in some instances, to improve function. The procedure is routinely accomplished through incisions made inside the nose. The excess bone and/or cartilage are removed and that remaining is reshaped. After alteration of these supporting structures, the skin is allowed to re-drape over them to give the nose its new shape. The changes may be subtle or dramatic depending on the needs of the patient.

My goal in rhinoplasty is to produce a nose that appears natural, functions properly and is in balance and harmony with the rest of the face. The "operated look" is one that should be avoided. The patient's wishes in regard to the type of nose desired are always considered, but there are limiting factors. Skin texture and thickness, previous injury and facial proportions and contour play an important role in what can and should be achieved. All of this will be discussed with you during your consultation.

The following is information to give you a better understanding of what is involved in having a rhinoplasty. Please read this carefully and if you have any questions, jot them down so we can discuss them at the time of your visit.

What is the earliest age rhinoplasty can be performed?

I prefer to wait until skeletal growth has ceased. This is usually around 14-15 in girls and 16-17 in boys. Exceptions are made in problem cases.

What determines the type of nose a person should have?

_____This is determined mainly by the proportions and relationships of the other facial structures. Sex plays a role in that females should have smaller, softer appearing noses than males.

Is it possible to show what the new nose will look like?

_____During your first visit, photographs will be taken which I use for study. These images may be altered on the computer to give you an impression of the final result. These images are simply an aid to understanding and do not

constitute a guarantee or warranty as to the results of surgery. This is for discussion only and does not imply that your new nose will look exactly like the image on the computer. If you do not like the looks of the new nose I create on the computer screen, further discussion is needed to help us agree on what our surgical goal should be.

Will insurance pay for nasal surgery?

_____Most insurance companies will pay only if the patient has a breathing problem or if the nasal deformity is the result of an accident. If the breathing problem is corrected at the same time the rhinoplasty is performed, they will usually pay for part of the surgery performed to improve breathing. If they pay part of the surgical fee, they usually pay part of the anesthesia and hospital costs. If the external nose is so crooked that it has to be straightened before the internal problem can be corrected, they may pay (usually 80%) the entire surgical fee. This decision rests with your insurance company. We request payment of all fees in advance of surgery. We will then file your insurance claim with your company on your behalf so that you are reimbursed according to their pre-authorization schedule.

Is it necessary to pack the nose?

Usually not, especially if there is no major breathing problem prior to surgery. Even if there is, I try to avoid packing and use small soft plastic splints, which have a built-in airway. If small packing is required, I usually remove them the following day.

Is there much pain?

It is surprising how little discomfort there is associated with rhinoplasty. Usually oral pain medication the first day or two is all that is necessary for any discomfort that may be present.

How many office visits are there after surgery?

_____If the surgery is performed in the hospital, most patients go home the next day. There will be a plastic splint on your nose, which is removed after 8 days. You will be seen again in another week and at 6-8 weeks for routine check-ups. I also like to see you one year after surgery to make certain you are doing well and that the results are as we expected.

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How much swelling will there be?

This varies with different patients. Some swelling and bruising of the nose and around the eyes is expected. This reaches its peak 2-3 days after surgery and then starts subsiding. Swelling is usually still present when the splint is removed. After 10-12 days, all visible swelling will have disappeared but there will be a feeling of numbness and stiffness of the tip of the nose, which means some swelling, persists. It will take this swelling several months to subside completely, but it will not be noticeable to anyone but the patient. In-patients with thick, oily skin, swelling is slower to resolve.

What are the limitations after surgery?

Patients should go back to school or to sedentary work one week after surgery. There should be no strenuous activity for two weeks. After that, strenuous activity may be resumed but you should not participate in any activity in which the nose could be bumped for a total of eight weeks. **Excessive** sun exposure should be avoided for eight weeks. Otherwise protect your nose and eyes with a titanium block (supplied by our office)

How soon after surgery can glasses be worn?

Glasses can be worn while the splint is on. After it is removed, they can still be worn but should not rest on the nose for eight weeks. We will show you how to do this. Contact lenses can be worn as soon as the swelling goes down around the eyes.

What if other surgery is needed?

During your consultation, your entire face will be evaluated. If I feel there are other procedures that would improve your appearance, I will discuss them with you. The most frequently performed adjunctive procedure is chin augmentation (mentoplasty) to correct a receding chin.

Does the nose grow as people get older?

No. However, as a person ages the fat in the area of the nasal-lip junction may be partially absorbed. This results in a drooping of the nasal

tip which makes the nose look longer. In such a situation, turning the nose up slightly adds to a more youthful appearance of the face.

Are there ever incisions on the outside of the nose?

Occasionally a small incision is made in the skin between the nostrils where it joins the upper lip. If the base of the nose is too wide, making incisions in the creases on both sides where the nostril and cheeks join, narrows it. The resulting scars are usually not visible.

Hopefully, this information has given you a better understanding about rhinoplasty. I'm certain it didn't answer all your questions, but it will help us during our discussion at the time of your consultation. I look forward to seeing you then.