

**Patient Advice Sheet on Sinus Surgery including FESS  
by Miss C. de Casso, ENT SpR, & P H Jones, ENT Consultant,  
Department of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery  
South Manchester University Hospitals NHS Trust,  
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***What are my sinuses?***

They are cavities next to the nose. They contain air. They are washed clean by mucus. The mucus drains into the nose. If this drainage is blocked the sinuses can get infected.

***How do you treat sinusitis?***

Usually with medicines such as steroids, antibiotics, nasal sprays, steam inhalations and nasal douches. If you are no better or have more attacks, you may need surgery.

***Are my headaches &/or facial pain due to sinusitis?***

Certainly not unless you have nasal symptoms as well. Nasal symptoms are not always due to sinusitis. Even if you have sinusitis the headache may not be due to it.

***How long will I be in hospital and off work?***

You will usually be in for an overnight stay. Take two weeks off work.

***How should I travel home?***

You may have a bleed. It is best to go home in a car or a taxi. Avoid public transport.

***Will I be asleep?***

Usually you are. This is called general anaesthesia. We can do it under local anaesthesia also. We use sprays and injections to "freeze" the nose inside. The doctor who makes you go to sleep is called an anaesthetist. He or she will tell you about your anaesthetic.

***How does the operation work?***

We enlarge the natural drainage of the sinuses. We remove any damaged infected tissue. We leave any tissue that can recover its natural function. We use an endoscope. This is a thin metal rod. It has several lenses. We look through it. We see straight into the narrow spaces of the nose and sinuses.

***What does FESS mean?***

**F**unctional **E**ndoscopic **S**inus **S**urgery.

***Do I have to have this operation?***

No. It is up to you. We call this elective. Without the operation your attacks of sinusitis will probably continue. You may need medicines for the infections. With surgery the sinusitis will probably improve a lot. It may not go completely.

***What will I feel like afterwards?***

You will have some discomfort afterwards which can include:

- A blocked nose. This may vary during the day. It will clear in three to six weeks.
- A runny nose. Blood stained or pink mucus. It will go darker and then dry up in a few weeks.
- Crusting in the nose with scabs over the healing raw areas.
- Pain, headaches or heaviness in the forehead for a few days until the sinuses are working again.
- Numbness of the teeth or roof of the mouth. This usually clears but it can take several weeks.
- A poor sense of smell or taste. This is usually not permanent. If it does not clear, tell us in the clinic.

## ***Sinus Surgery including FESS***

- An infection in the nose. This is not common. You may have worse pain and even bleeding.

### ***Can anything serious happen?***

Serious complications are uncommon. They are caused by damage to nearby organs. These include the brain and the eye with its muscles, nerves and blood vessels. The fluid surrounding the brain may leak. This may need a graft to repair. All operations and anaesthetics have risks. Some are serious. The risks are similar to those of everyday life. Examples are flying on holiday; driving in a car or walking down a street.

### ***What do I need to avoid afterwards?***

- Do not blow the nose hard. This can increase the swelling and obstruction. It may cause bleeding.
- To avoid colds keep away from crowds for 10 days. Colds can stop healing or cause bleeding.
- Avoid excessive activity for ten to fifteen days. It can do the same.
- Avoid any activity which could make you hot or flushed.

### ***What can I do?***

Any normal light activity such as a gentle stroll is OK.

### ***What do I do if any serious bleeding occurs?***

- Blow each nostril clear one at a time.
- Hold your head forward.
- Squeeze the lower fleshy part of the nostrils firmly closed. Use your thumb and first finger
- Use a watch and time at least ten minutes.
- Put ice in a plastic bag. Add a little water.
- Put the ice pack on the bridge of your nose and your forehead.
- If the bleeding is still going after half an hour, call us.

### ***Do I have to take any treatment after the operation?***

- Antibiotics. If your sinuses were infected during the operation.
- Salt water douches. These are to clear the crusting and blockage.
  - Douche the nostrils alternately with 3-4mls, repeated 3 times, 3 times a day for two weeks.
  - Reduce to twice a day for another 5-7 days.
  - Then to once a day or stop if you feel you do not need them anymore.
- Intranasal steroid spray or drops. You may need these for a few weeks. You may not need them. You may need them always to use them. This is to stop the problems coming back. If so, we will tell you in the clinic after the operation.
- Steam inhalations. Not the first day. Then steam your nose three times a day before douching. Use a pint of hot (**but not boiling**) water. Do this for 2 weeks or while it helps.

### ***May I ask a question?***

At any time. You can also refuse to have the operation at any time. If you ask a question please ask someone suitable. A junior doctor or nurse may not know what you want to know. Please do not ask several doctors the same question and compare answers.