

Patient Advice Sheet for the Trimming of the Inferior Turbinates (ITs)
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July 2003

What are the inferior turbinates?

Shelves of bone attached to the sidewall of the inner nose. They are covered with a skin called mucosa. This can swell a lot. There are three turbinates. The lowest is the inferior. It lies directly in the pathway for the air you breathe. Colds cause swelling of the inferior turbinate. This blocks your nose.

Why are mine swollen?

We do not always know. It may be due to allergy. Or smoking. Sometimes it just happens. It may happen in "intrinsic" rhinitis as may polyps

Do I need my inferior turbinates?

No but they help warm and moisten the air you breathe. We do not remove all the turbinate. We make it a more normal size.

How does the operation work?

We just trim the swollen lower edge along the full length.

Do I have to have this operation?

No. It is up to you. We call it elective. Without the operation your nose will stay as it is.

What are the alternatives?

None if steroid nose sprays have not helped. Decongestant drops & sprays are OK for a week or two. If you use them for longer they make the swelling worse. There are many other ways of making the turbinates smaller. We feel that trimming offers the best long term result. We feel that other methods have similar complications.

What symptoms will be better after the operation?

Your nose won't be as blocked.

What symptoms won't be better?

All other nasal symptoms.

What will happen if I do not have this operation?

Your nose will remain blocked. It may become more blocked.

Are there any problems with the operation?

It may not work fully. The swelling may come back as time passes.

What is the long term outlook after the operation?

The swelling tends to come back a bit over the years. There is usually some long term benefit.

Does allergy make a difference?

Please tell us about any allergy you have. Are you allergic to dusts you breathe in? Examples are pollen, house dust, animal fur. Allergies need treatment after the operation. If they are not treated the blockage may come back. Steroid sprays are best for blockage.

Will I need any long term treatment after the operation?

Steroid sprays may be needed. This is so even if you are not allergic.

Where are the cuts made? Will there be a scar?

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All the cuts are inside your nose. There is no scar

What can go wrong? What can you do if it does?

If we take off too much the nose can be too dry. Crusts may form. This is very rare. We can help if this happens.

Can anything serious happen?

Occasionally bleeding may be severe. Bleeding may be repeated. You may need to come back in. You may need more operations, X-rays or even blood transfusions. More serious complications are very uncommon. 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 the street.

What do I need to do to help before my operation?

If you smoke - stop. Your nose will be more blocked & runny for some months. Then it will be better. You may not need the operation.

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

Will there be anything in my nose afterwards?

Soft plastic splints are used sometimes. They stop the insides of the nose sticking together when they are healing. We slide them out after a week. They are held in place with one stitch. You may need a pack to stop bleeding. We seldom use heavy nasal packs now. We use them only if they are really needed. We take packs out after 2 to 4 hours or next morning.

What will I feel like afterwards?

Your nose will be a bit blocked and runny for some weeks. It won't hurt much. You may have some discomfort such as:

- 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 dry up in a few weeks.
- Crusting in the nose with scabs over the healing raw areas.
- Headaches or heaviness in the forehead for a few days until the sinuses are working again.
- A poor sense of smell or taste. This is usually not permanent. If it does not clear, tell us in the clinic.
- An infection in the nose. This is not common. You may have worse pain and bleeding.

What do I need to avoid afterwards?

- Don't blow your nose hard. It won't help. It may cause bleeding.
- To avoid colds keep away from crowds for ten days. A cold could stop healing or cause bleeding.
- Avoid excessive activity for ten to fifteen days. This can have the same effects as infection.
- 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.

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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 you are still bleeding after half an hour, call us.

Do I have to take any treatment after the operation?

- A decongestant nasal spray. This helps clear the nose a bit. Do not use for more than ten days.
- 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.
- 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 two weeks or while it seems to help.

When will you need to look at my nose again?

Not always. We usually see you once after the operation. This is to check all is well. If it is you probably do not need to see us again.

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.