What is Septoplasty?

What is the Septum?
The septum is the part of the nose that divides the nasal chamber in two parts. It is made up of bone and cartilage.

Septoplasty is surgery to straighten the septum. Your surgeon removes or shapes the parts of the cartilage or bone causing the blockage. The goal is most often to improve breathing through the nose but it can also prevent sinus infections. Sometimes a septoplasty is done at the same time as a procedure to straighten or correct the appearance of the nose (septorhinoplasty).

Septoplasty Home Care

Incision Care
- Expect nasal drainage. At first, nasal drainage will be bloody. It will slowly change to a pink-yellow color over the next few days.
- You will need to change the small gauze pad under your nose when it becomes soiled.
- Expect crusting in your nose for 3-6 weeks while the incision is healing. Do not pick the inside of your nose.
Nasal Splint/Nasal Packing
- A thin plastic splint may be used inside the nose to help support the septum. The splints will be removed at your clinic visit.
- During surgery your doctor may insert packing in both sides of your nose to hold the septum in place. Packing also reduces bleeding and the chance of scarring inside the nose.
- They may use packing that will dissolve. If not, it will be removed at your first clinic visit.
- You may take pain medicine 30 minutes before your clinic visit, only if someone is able to drive you to the clinic. This will make packing or splint removal more comfortable.
- Expect some mild blood tinged drainage after the splints or packing is removed. This will slowly lessen over the next few hours.
- Do not use a straw to drink fluids for 1 week. This can create suction in the back of your throat, which could cause risk of bleeding or swelling.

Nasal Congestion
- Expect your nose to be stuffy. This is caused by swelling that will decrease over the next few weeks.
- You will be breathing through your mouth until the swelling is less. This may cause some dryness and soreness of your mouth and throat. Using a humidifier or vaporizer along with brushing your teeth may provide comfort.
- Your doctor may prescribe a nasal saline (salt water) spray/mist to loosen crusting and help with congested feeling.
- Do not blow your nose for 1 week. After one week, you may blow your nose very gently.
- Do not hold back a sneeze. Sneeze with your mouth open. Try not to sniff.
- Do not use decongestants or antihistamines unless your doctor tells you to.

Pain
- Discomfort following septoplasty varies from person to person. You will be given pain medicine to use as needed at home.
- Do not take aspirin or anti-inflammatory pain medicine, such as ibuprofen for 1 week before or after surgery, it can cause bleeding.
- Cold packs can be used to reduce swelling, and ease pain. They work best if used during the first 24-48 hours. Apply for 20 minutes at a time 3-4 times daily. Frozen peas or corn in a Ziploc bag work well, if this feels too heavy, try a wash cloth soaked in ice water.
Activity

• For 1 week, you can engage in **light activity only**. No aerobics, jogging or swimming.
  No lifting more than 25 pounds.
• Keep your head 30° above your heart for the next few weeks. Do this by sleeping on 2-3 pillows.
• You may drive a car **only** if you are **not** taking pain medicine.
• If your job requires strenuous activity, you should not work for at least 5-7 days.
• After 1 week, as you are feeling better, you can go back to your normal routine.

Diet

• You can eat or drink whatever you like, although soft bland foods may be easier the first few days.
• Do not drink alcohol while you are using pain medicine.

When to call the Doctor

• Bleeding that soaking the gauze dressing in 10 minutes or less.
• If your temperature is 101°F or higher for 2 readings 4 hours apart.
• Pain not controlled by the pain medicines.

Phone Numbers

If you have any questions or problems once you are home, please call.
Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. call the Otolaryngology (ENT) Clinic at (608) 263-6190.

Evening or weekends, the clinic number will give you the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If outside the Madison area, call toll free at **1-800-323-8942**.