

Rhinoplasty

Rhinoplasty entails surgery to reshape the nose. It is one of the most common of all plastic surgery procedures. Rhinoplasty can reduce or increase the size of your nose, change the shape of the tip or the bridge, narrow the span of the nostrils, or change the angle between your nose and your upper lip. It may also correct a birth defect or injury, or help relieve some breathing problems. Rhinoplasty can enhance your appearance and improve your self-confidence, but it won't necessarily change your looks to match your ideal, or cause other people to treat you differently. Before you decide to have surgery, think carefully about your expectations and discuss them with your plastic surgeon.

The best candidates for rhinoplasty are people who are looking for improvement, not perfection, in the way their nose look. Rhinoplasty can be performed to meet aesthetic goals or for reconstructive purposes-to correct birth defects or breathing problems. Age is a consideration. Many surgeons prefer not to operate on teenagers until after they've completed their growth spurt-around 14 or 15 for girls, a bit later for boys. It's important to consider teenagers' social and emotional adjustment. The surgery should not be performed because it is what their parents really want.

There are open and closed techniques for Rhinoplasty surgery. When an "open" technique is used, or when the procedure calls for the narrowing of flared nostrils, the small scars on the base of the nose are usually not very visible.

When planning your surgery good communication between you and your plastic surgeon is essential. In your initial consultation, the surgeon will ask what you'd like your nose to look like, evaluate the structure of your nose and face, and discuss the possibilities with you. Factors that can influence the procedure include the structure of your nasal bones and cartilage, the shape of your face, the thickness of your skin, your age, and your expectations. Be sure to tell your surgeon if you've had any previous nose surgery or an injury to your nose, even if it was many years ago. You should also inform your surgeon if you have any allergies or breathing difficulties; if you're taking any medications, vitamins, or recreational drugs; and if you smoke.

The duration of a rhinoplasty depends upon the extent of the procedure but, usually takes an hour or two. During surgery the skin of the nose is separated from its supporting framework of bone and cartilage, which is then sculpted to the desired shape. The nature of the sculpting will depend on your problem and your surgeon's preferred technique. Finally, the skin is re draped over the new framework. When the surgery is complete, a splint will be applied to help your nose maintain its new shape. Nasal packs or soft plastic splints also may be placed in your nostrils to stabilize the septum, the dividing wall between the air passages.

After your surgery a little bleeding is common during the first few days following surgery, and you may continue to feel some stuffiness for several weeks. Your surgeon will probably ask you not to blow your nose for a week or so, while the tissues heal. Most rhinoplasty patients are up and about within two days, and able to return to school or sedentary work a

week or so following surgery. It will be several weeks, however, before you're entirely up to speed. Your surgeon will give you more specific guidelines for gradually resuming your normal activities. They're likely to include these suggestions: Avoid strenuous activity (jogging, swimming, bending, sexual relations-any activity that increases your blood pressure) for two to three weeks. Avoid hitting or rubbing your nose, or getting it sunburned, for eight weeks. Be gentle when washing your face and hair or using cosmetics. You can wear contact lenses as soon as you feel like it, but glasses are another story. Once the splint is off, they'll have to be taped to your forehead or propped on your cheeks for another six to seven weeks, until your nose is completely healed.

In the days following surgery, when your face is bruised and swollen, it's easy to forget that you will be looking better. In fact, many patients feel depressed for a while after plastic surgery-it's quite normal and understandable. Rest assured that this stage will pass. Day by day, your nose will begin to look better and your spirits will improve. Within a week or two, you'll no longer look as if you've just had surgery. Still, healing is a slow and gradual process. Some subtle swelling may be present for months, especially in the tip. The final results of rhinoplasty may not be apparent for a year or more.

In the meantime, you might experience some unexpected reactions from family and friends. They may say they don't see a major difference in your nose. Or they may act resentful, especially if you've changed something they view as a family or ethnic trait. If that happens, try to keep in mind why you decided to have this surgery in the first place. If you've met your goals, then your surgery is a success.