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PLASTIC AND COSMETIC SURGEON

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RHINOPLASTY POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS & ADVICE

The following after-care information will help make your surgery safe and uneventful. It is important that you understand it all. If you have any questions, please ask me or my staff. In some cases there will be variations to the instructions, and these will be discussed with you.

Dressing

There is typically a splint or tape on your nose after surgery. Please leave this on and dry until your first postoperative visit, at which time it will be removed. Immediately after surgery you may also have a "mustache" gauze dressing held with tape onto the upper lip. This is to catch any dripping of blood, and once the dripping stops, usually a day or two after surgery, the tape can be left off.

Pain Pills

Most patients are pleasantly surprised how limited their postoperative discomfort is. To reduce the need for pain pills, Advil (Ibuprofen) 200 mg should be taken regularly every 6 hours. Midway between the 6 hourly dose of Advil that is, 3 hours after the last dose of Advil please take either an extra strength Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or, if there is more discomfort, one of the stronger pain pills prescribed to you. This combination of anti-inflammatory (Advil) and analgesic (Tylenol extra strength or stronger pain pill) is now recognized as the most effective way of treating postoperative discomfort. Both pills can be stopped when the discomfort subsides. Please note that all pain pills cause constipation, and if you are inclined to becoming constipated, you should consider the use of a stool softener such as Colace 200 mg twice a day, and a laxative such as Milk of Magnesia, 15 to 30 cc at nighttime. Drinking copious amounts of fluids and eating fruit also reduces constipation.

Eating After Surgery

Patients may experience nausea after a general anesthetic. It is therefore wise to drink clear fluids (apple juice, black tea, flat pop) until the stomach feels settled. Then try eating clear soup and crackers. A normal diet is usually possible the next day. On rare occasion, a patient may feel nausea for a few days after surgery. Gravel tablets may then be helpful.

Wound Care

Starting the day after surgery, please cleanse all incision lines at the base of the nose twice a day with a Q-Tip and mild soap and water. The Q-Tip can be passed into the nostril, to the length of the cotton portion of the Q-Tip. After cleansing, a generous amount of Polysporin ointment or Vaseline should be applied to the nostrils and incision lines. Once the dissolving stitches have fallen out, and the clots have dropped off, the Polysporin ointment can be stopped. A high quality scar cream (please inquire in the office) should then be applied to the scar line twice a day for 2 to 3 months.

Bruising & Swelling

Swelling and bruising are a normal part of a rhinoplasty. Wet ice packs should not be applied to the nose as they may loosen the nasal splint. Dry cold gel packs are permissible, but are of limited value as the bruising and swelling comes from under the splint. Bruising and swelling will subside more quickly with head elevation, and it is helpful to sleep with an extra pillow for the first three weeks after surgery.

Frequently it is difficult to breath through the nose because of internal swelling, and most patients breath through their mouth. To minimize throat dryness in the morning, a cool mist vaporizer can be used at night.

Please note that bruising may take two weeks to subside, but generally some make-up can be applied after a week to conceal the discoloration. 80% of the swelling is typically gone within three weeks, while the last 20% of swelling takes 9 to 12 months to completely subside. It is common to have more bruising and swelling on one side than the other. This will even out with time.

Nosebleeds

Activities that increase your pulse or the blood pressure in the face can contribute to nosebleeds. It is therefore suggested that you do not do any exercises that increase your cardiac output for the first two weeks.

You can start gently blowing your nose four days after surgery. When you pick something off the floor, in the first two weeks, please bend your knees rather than swinging your head down.

Early Fever

A low grade fever (up to 37.8°C) is not uncommon the day after surgery. It usually occurs after a general anesthetic and results from small collections of mucous in the lungs. It is therefore important after a general anesthetic to take frequent deep breaths, and to cough deeply. The coughing clears the lungs and corrects the low grade fever. Failure to clear the lungs adequately can on rare occasion lead to a lung infection.

Wound Infection

Wound infections fortunately are uncommon. Minor leakage of clear yellowish fluid from stitches may occur and persist until the stitches are out. This fluid is not an infection, and is managed with soap and water washes two to three times a day, followed by the application of Polysporin ointment and a light dressing. If the drainage from the wound becomes "soupy" and smells, or is associated with increasing redness, pain and swelling, then a deeper infection may be occurring. Do not hesitate to phone the office or see your family doctor if this happens. You will need to be seen as you may need to have antibiotics.

Wearing Glasses & Pressure On The Nose

Contacts can be worn immediately after surgery. Glasses are best worn with a piece of tape supporting the central arm of the glasses to the forehead, slightly above the nose, so that no lateral pressure on the glasses is transmitted to the nose itself. Glasses can be worn normally after two weeks. You should not participate in contact sports for six weeks to avoid accidental blows to the nose which could cause displacement.

Nasal Appearance

Immediately after surgery, there may be some uneven swelling of the sides of the nose or of the nasal tip. While this swelling will give the nose an asymmetric appearance initially, as it subsides, the asymmetries will even out. For a few days after surgery, the nasal tip swelling may also cause it to look as if it is rotated upwards too much. This too is temporary, and will settle down.

Numbness

It is not uncommon to have nasal tip numbness after surgery. This will not affect your sense of smell. Normal feeling usually returns within six to nine months.

Nasal Spray

Please avoid antihistamines or decongestant nasal sprays as they dry out the nasal mucosa more and potentially cause more bleeding. Salt water (saline) nasal sprays, eg. Salinex, can be used, starting the day after surgery, but are not necessary.

Mobility

As a routine, it is important to be up and walking the day of surgery, and prolonged periods of bed rest are discouraged. Lying in bed can increase the rare but ever present risk of developing blood clots in the calves which in turn can cause pulmonary emboli. It is good to go for little walks, and to have frequent naps if you are feeling tired. For the first two weeks there should not be any heavy lifting or exercise that makes your heart beat fast. More bleeding could result. After two weeks, full activities can be resumed.

Tanning

Fresh scars and areas that have been bruised should not be tanned for at least four months after surgery. Early tanning can cause permanent hyperpigmentation of the scar and of the surrounding areas. Normal tanning can resume after four months, but please remember that tanning does cause premature skin aging and skin cancers.

Driving a Car

You must not be driving a car for at least 24 hours after a sedative or a general anesthetic, nor if you feel drowsy for any reason. Do not drive a motor vehicle if you are having any pain, as the pain may cause you to jerk the steering wheel and lose control. You also must avoid driving a car if you are in any way restricted in your mobility or your vision, as this may compromise safe driving.

Prolonged Nasal Swelling

In some patients, the swelling in the nose may be very slow to subside. In such cases, it may be helpful to "tape" the nose in the evenings, and at night time. The tape needs to be elastic and is usually applied side to side, over the bridge, just above the tip of the nose. I will show you how to apply the tape. The best tape is 3M Blenderm tape. This tape may not always be available in a pharmacy, and may need to be ordered beforehand. Please phone your pharmacy ahead of time to make sure it is in stock.

Fatigue and "Feeling Down"

While the results of plastic surgery are typically gratifying and uplifting, it is not uncommon for patients to have "down" times. Early on there is the residual effect of the anesthetic, coupled with discomfort, swelling and bruising at the surgical site. This is followed by the typically slow maturation of the scar itself. These frustrations all play together on the psyche, making one question the reason for doing the surgery in the first place. You are not alone with these thoughts, and they are entirely normal. Rest assured that well over 90% of patients are pleased with the results of their surgery, and the apprehensions and "down" times are eventually replaced by feelings of satisfaction and confidence.

Questions/Problems

Every effort is made to provide you with a surgical experience that is safe and as comfortable as possible. Any suggestions you have that might improve the experience are much appreciated.

If you have any questions, concerns, or problems, please call the office at 416-447-6176. If there is an urgent situation, and I am not immediately available, please go to the emergency room department at North York General Hospital, or your closest emergency room department.

I hope you have a speedy recovery from your surgery.

Sincerely,
Bernd R. Neu, M.D.