
WHAT IS A SEPTOPLASTY?

Septoplasty is the name of the surgical procedure to correct a crooked nasal septum. The septum is a piece of cartilage and bone that divides the nose into right and left sides. In some people the septum is bent into one or both sides of the nose, which can cause breathing difficulties. Sometimes this is because of an injury to the nose, but sometimes it just grows that way. If your child has a blocked nose because of the bend in the septum, an operation will help. The operation is not meant to change the way the nose looks from the outside.

What does the operation involve?

Usually the operation is done as day surgery. This means that your child will have the operation and go home the same day. If your child requires an overnight stay in the hospital, your doctor will discuss this with you. The operation takes about 30 to 45 minutes and is done while the child is asleep (general anesthesia). The operation is usually all done through the nostrils and there will be no scars on the child's face. A cut is made inside the nose. The septum is straightened by reshaping the cartilage, taking out some of the bone and moving the rest of the septum back to the middle of the nose. Absorbable stitches are used to hold it all in place. There may be gauze padding in each of the nostrils to keep things in place and to prevent bleeding.

What are the possible risks of the operation?

The operation is very safe, but every operation has risks:

- Sometimes the nose may bleed after this operation, and the doctor may have to put more gauze pads into the nostrils. Rarely, the child may need to return to the operating room to stop the bleeding.
- Infection in the nose is rare after this operation, but if it happens it can be serious, so the child should be seen by a doctor if the nose is getting more and more blocked and sore.

- Very unusually, the operation may leave a hole in the septum inside the nose going from one side to the other. This can cause a whistling noise while breathing. Also crusting with blockage or nosebleeds can occur from this hole. Most of the time this needs no treatment. More surgery can be done if necessary to mend the hole.
- Very rarely you may find that the shape of the nose has changed slightly, with a dip in the bridge of the nose.
- Very rarely, you may have some numbness of your teeth, which usually settle with time.

What happens after the operation?

- It is normal for bleeding after the operation. Your child may need an absorbable dressing place in each side of the nose to stop the bleeding. Do not remove the gauze padding from inside the nostrils. Your doctor will do this at the follow-up appointment.
- It is common for the nose to be quite blocked and to be a little uncomfortable for a few days after the operation. Simple painkillers usually help. Your child may be given drops or spray to help with the blocked nose.
- Some children may feel that the nose or the upper lip is a bit numb. This may last for a few days.
- It is important that your child does not blow his/her nose for a few days after the operation. Ask your surgeon about when your child can start to gently blow his/her nose.
- Some mucous and blood stained liquid may drain from the nose for the first week or so following the operation and this is normal. It is important to stay away from dusty and smoky environments while the child is recovering.
- Your child will need to rest at home from school or daycare for one week.
- After your child's surgery, and before you go home, your nurse will give you instruction on when to return to the hospital for a follow-up visit and how to care for your child at home.