

Septoplasty

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What is septoplasty?

Septoplasty is a surgical procedure which straightens the septum, the bony and cartilaginous division between the right and left nasal passage. The septum also supports the nose and directs airflow. A deviated or crooked septum can cause or contribute to such problems as difficulty breathing, chronic sinus infections, bleeding problems, snoring, and sleep apnea.

What causes a deviated septum?

In some people, the septum can be deviated from birth. In others, the condition can be caused by an injury, such as a broken nose. Additionally, the septum may bend to one side or the other as a result of aging. In any case, surgery may be recommended if the condition causes chronic problems.

Diagnosing a deviated septum

In the office, a deviated septum can be diagnosed by direct inspection with a headlight and speculum. An endoscope, which is a thin lighted instrument, can also be used to evaluate the nasal and sinus structures in greater detail. Allergy and chronic sinus conditions can be evaluated during the same office visit, as they can cause similar symptoms.

The septoplasty procedure

Septoplasty is normally a sixty minute surgical procedure performed under general anesthesia. The procedure is done with small incisions hidden inside the nose, and no bruising or swelling is seen on the outside. Patients usually return home the same day after a few hours in recovery. Nasal packing is usually not necessary, unless there is excessive bleeding. To reduce bleeding, patients should avoid aspirin and Motrin type products as well as minimize their activity level after surgery.

Many patients with a deviated septum often have a nasal deformity or external nasal fracture. Cosmetic or reconstructive nasal surgery (rhinoplasty) can often be performed at the same time as septoplasty. In this way, many patients can improve both the function and appearance of their nose with one anesthesia and recovery period.

After approximately one week, another examination is required to monitor healing. In general, patients who work in an office can slowly return to work after four or five days, and resume normal activity after about ten days. Workers who perform heavy tasks should avoid work for two weeks.

Is septoplasty right for you?

Most insurance companies will pay for septoplasty if a deviated septum is causing problems. It's important to have your doctor take a full medical history and analyze the inside of your nose to see if you are a candidate for this surgery.

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For more information, call Dr. Colden: (978) 685-2900.

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