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NHS Grampian

Injury to the nose (adult)

Information for patients and carers

Emergency Department
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

What is this leaflet for?

This leaflet gives advice on how to care for an injured nose.

It explains:

- what a nasal fracture is
- when follow-up may be needed
- a procedure to straighten your nose under local anaesthetic

What is a nasal fracture?

Injuries to the nose are very common.

The top of the nose has two thin bones. The tip is made of cartilage.

A nasal fracture means the bones in the nose are broken.

How do we diagnose a nasal fracture?

A clinician will examine you.

We do not carry out X-rays, as they do not provide useful information.

It can be difficult to tell the difference between a fracture and bruising. Both are treated in the same way.

How do we treat nasal fractures?

Most nasal fractures do not need treatment and will heal on their own.

However, you may need further assessment if:

- your nose looks a different shape from before
- you have reduced airflow up one or both nostrils

In these cases, an Ear Nose & Throat (ENT) specialist may be able to move your nose back into its previous shape while it heals.

Swelling can make your nose appear crooked.

We recommend waiting 5 days for the swelling to reduce before checking the shape.

If, after 5 days, your nose looks different, a procedure can be done between day 7 and day 14 to try and move it back into position.

This procedure only works while the bones are still healing. Ideally, it should be done within 14 days, and no later than 21 days after the injury.

If your nose is not misshaped, or you do not want treatment, you do not need any follow-up.

How can I treat my nose at home?

- Take regular pain relief
- Try not to blow your nose for the first week
- Apply a cold pack 3 to 4 times a day during the first 24 hours (for example, frozen peas wrapped in a towel)
- Avoid strenuous activity or exercise for 72 hours
- Avoid hot and spicy food and drinks for 48 hours
- Avoid contact sports for 6 weeks

What do I do if my nose starts to bleed again?

- Apply pressure to the soft part of your nose (not the bone) for 20 minutes
- Sit forward with your mouth open so you can spit out any blood
- Apply a cold pack over the bridge of your nose

Most nosebleeds will stop after these steps.

If bleeding doesn't stop after trying this twice, return to the Emergency Department.

Manipulation of nasal fracture

If, after 5 days, your nose appears a different shape from before and you would like treatment, please call **01224 556100** to book an urgent clinic appointment.

If your nose looks normal and you can breathe easily, you do not need to book an appointment.

The procedure aims to return your nose to its previous shape. It cannot change the shape in any other way.

Before the procedure:

- Please arrive 10 minutes before your appointment
- Location: Rapid Access Clinic, Ward 210, Level 5, Pink Zone, ARI
- You can eat and drink as normal
- The procedure is done under local anaesthetic. You will be awake

During the procedure:

- Local anaesthetic is injected into the bridge of your nose
- An anaesthetic spray is used inside your nose
- The doctor will gently move your nose back into its original position

The procedure usually takes a few minutes and you can go home soon afterwards.

After the procedure:

- Take pain relief (such as paracetamol or ibuprofen) if needed
- You may have small amounts of blood-stained nasal discharge. This should settle within 10 days
- You can return to work or school the next day
- Swelling and bruising should settle within 6 weeks
- Avoid contact sports for 6 weeks

Risks of manipulation under local anaesthesia

- Your nose may not look exactly the same as before, especially if you've had previous injuries or surgery
- Sometimes we cannot move the bridge of the nose. This may be because of previous injury or surgery to your nose, or because some people heal more quickly than others and the bones have already begun to fuse
- You may feel some discomfort during the procedure
- Bleeding may occur, especially if your nose bled at the time of injury
- Rarely, bruising under the eyes

This leaflet is also available in large print.

Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on 01224 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 1100.

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments or suggestions about how we can improve it, please call 01224 554149 to let us know.

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