

Patient information

Broken nose (nasal fracture)

Integrated Emergency & Medical Pathways division

What is a Broken Nose?

A broken nose (nasal fracture) is a crack or break in one or more of the bones of the nose. It is commonly caused by falls, sporting injuries, assaults, or road traffic accidents. Most broken noses heal without long-term problems, although some injuries require specialist treatment to improve breathing or correct a change in appearance.

Symptoms

Pain and tenderness; swelling; bruising around the nose and eyes; nosebleeds; difficulty breathing through the nose; blocked nose; crooked appearance; crunching sensation.

Treatment

This largely depends on the clinical findings. Your doctor or nurse practitioner will examine your nose to ensure there is no collection of blood (haematoma) in the septum of your nose (the partition between the two nostrils), no active bleeding and that you are able to breathe through both nostrils. In cases of simple, uncomplicated fractures patients can be:

- Given advice to use ice packs and take regular painkillers – Paracetamol, Ibuprofen (Nurofen) – following the dosage instructions on the packet.
- Given antibiotics if there has been a laceration overlying the fracture or a haematoma has been lanced and drained.
- Discharged with a follow-up appointment in the Ear Nose and Throat emergency clinic within 6-14 days. This is when the reduction (resetting) of the broken nose usually takes place (if required). This manipulation is performed after the initial soft tissue swelling has settled.

Looking After Yourself

Avoid contact sports for 6 weeks. Avoid excessive nose blowing. Sneeze with your mouth open. Take care to avoid further injury.

When to Seek Urgent Medical Advice

Persistent nosebleeds, increasing breathing difficulty, clear fluid from the nose after head injury, visual changes, severe headache, vomiting, drowsiness, confusion, or signs of infection.

Recovery

Swelling improves within 1–2 weeks, bruising in 2–3 weeks, and bones heal in 4–6 weeks. In cases of complicated nasal fractures or when associated with serious injury to other facial structures and / or signs of a head injury, you may be referred to a specialist surgeon for further treatment.

Important points to remember

It is important to rest following this type of injury and avoid any strenuous activity over the next 24 hours. Too much activity may give you a headache or increase the pain in your nose.

- Do not blow your nose for the first week following your injury
- Take regular pain relief that has been suggested or prescribed for you by the doctor or emergency nurse practitioner
- Applying cold packs to the nose three or four times a day for 10 minutes for the first 24 hours following your injury can help reduce the pain in your nose and reduce the swelling to the area.

Contacting the team

If you have any questions about your care during your visit, please speak to a member of the nursing or reception team.

If you would like this leaflet in another language or format, or you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team on paht.pals@nhs.net