

# **Patient Information**

## **Fractured Nose**

Ears, Nose and Throat Department



## **Diagnosing a nasal fracture**

The nasal bones are the most commonly broken bones of the face as they have an exposed, prominent position and little structural support. X-rays have little value in confirming or ruling out a nasal fracture due to the difficult imaging of these bones (plain film (X-rays) miss approximately 50% of fractures). The management of nasal injuries is therefore guided only by the clinical findings, such as having a physical examination by a doctor. If any X-rays are deemed necessary, it is only for suspected involvement of other important facial structures, such as the eye sockets, cheek bones and jaw bones.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of a nasal fracture?**

- Obvious deformity/deviation of the nose.
- Instability and crepitus (clicking).
- Skin lacerations (cuts).
- Swelling/bruising.
- Nosebleed.
- Obstructed nasal passages (blocked nose).
- Discharge of clear watery fluid from one nostril.

## **How is the fracture managed?**

This largely depends on the clinical findings. Your doctor or nurse practitioner will examine your nose to ensure there is no hematoma (collection of blood) 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 you may:

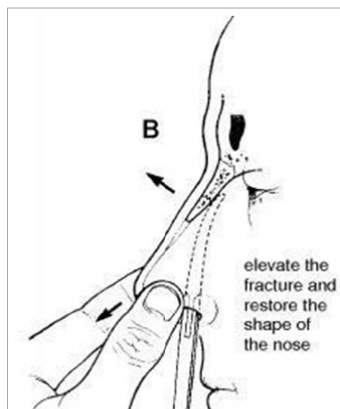
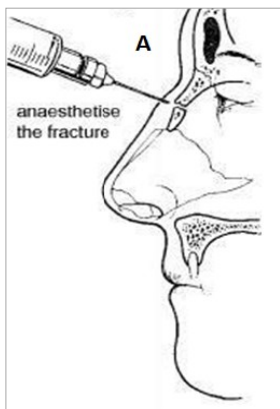
- Be given advice to use ice packs and take regular painkillers, i.e. paracetamol, ibuprofen - follow the dosage instructions on the packet.
- Be given antibiotics if there has been a laceration (cut) overlying the fracture or a hematoma has been lanced (pricked or cut open) and drained.
- Be discharged with a follow-up appointment to attend the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) clinic at the outpatient department within 5-7 days. For this appointment, please bring a recent photograph of your face if possible.
- If your nose has changed shape, the correction (resetting) of the broken nose is usually performed at this appointment. It is not usually done sooner as the initial soft tissue swelling has to settle first. The correction is done by manipulation under local anesthetic, so please come accompanied if possible.

- If your nasal shape is back to normal and you are having no problems breathing through your nose, then please do not attend the follow-up appointment.

## **What is a manipulation under local anesthetic (MUA) of the nose?**

After discussion with your doctor, manipulation of the nasal bones to straighten the nose and aim to improve your breathing, might be advised. However, it is not always necessary to have a MUA and it is not always successful.

MUA of the nose should ideally be done 7 days post injury but no later than 14 days post injury to ensure that the nasal bones have not set in place.



When MUA is performed, it will be under a local anesthetic (while you are awake). A small injection of local anesthetic is given into either side of the nose. There may be a little bleeding following the procedure but not very often.

## **Post treatment advice**

- Be careful not to knock your nose for 2-3 weeks following the procedure.
- If you notice the shape of your nose has not improved after a period of 1-2 months, return to your GP for a referral back to the ENT rhinoplasty clinic.
- If your airway has not improved or you feel congested again, return to your GP for a referral back to ENT.

## **How long will it be before the fracture heals?**

Fractured nasal bones usually heal within 2 to 3 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.

## Useful Telephone Numbers

- Switchboard, Lister Hospital  
☎ 01438 314333 - ask for ENT Department
- ENT Nurse Specialist (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)  
☎ Mobile: 0778 534 3359 or 0787 639 0290

**In an emergency, dial 999 and request an ambulance or attend your nearest Emergency Department.**

NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. ☎ 111

### Useful websites:

[www.entuk.org](http://www.entuk.org)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)**

You can request this information in a different format or another language.