

The Nose

Presented by River Region Facial Plastics

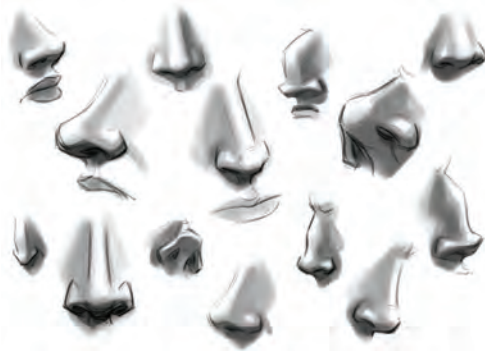
We all have one - a nose. There are all sizes, shapes, colors, and some work better than others. The nose is frequently talked about in saying someone is "nosey", the horse "won by a nose" at the races, or one is "nosing around". However, with all this about noses surveys suggest that ninety percent of people dislike something about their nose.

Besides being a structure to hold our glasses and sunglasses, what does our nose do?

Almost all of us breathe, or should, through our nose. The air that we breath through our nose is filtered, warmed, and humidified by it. Our sense of smell is via our noses which communicate this sensation to our brains through our olfactory nerve. When a molecule of aromatic gas is inspired through our noses, a chemical reaction occurs with our olfactory nerve endings within the lining membrane of the nose. Our brain then allows interpretation of that reaction as a good or bad aroma. Certain chemicals, colds, or any form of reaction or infection or obstruction can affect our sense of smell. Children can be born with an imperfect communication from the nose to the throat, a condition called choanal atresia which requires surgical repair. If both sides of the nose are obstructed, very early surgical correction is required or the child will not suckle.

As estimated ten percent of adults have acquired a traumatic obstruction to their noses from a birthing injury to the nasal septum, the center portion of our noses. Broken noses and noses that grew crooked from birth constitute the majority of the remaining defective noses. The nose bones are the most frequently broken bones of the face.

Obstruction to nasal breathing can affect sleep apnea, loss of smell, and many impaired body functions. In addition to the deviation of nasal septums, other causes include nasal allergy, turbinate enlargement, nasal polyps, and tumors. Nasal allergies, colds, and overly sensitive noses to environmental exposures (cold air, perfumes, smoke, etc.) enlarge the turbinates within our noses. Turbinates are enriched with many blood vessels and are long somewhat cylindrical structures on the lateral sides of the nasal interior. There is a large, medium, and small turbinate on each side. These are the "warmers and humidifiers" of our noses, but when swollen from conditions mentioned above our nasal respirations are disturbed.



Nose drawings by John K. Lei

Our air conditioners and heated houses often dehydrate our air so hydration of our noses with saline nasal sprays and saline washing of them is essential. For the allergic individual, prescription steroidal nasal sprays and antihistamines can help. Allergy testing and/or allergy shots can prove helpful also.

For others, corrective surgery may be needed. The person who has a deviated nasal septum or enlarged turbinates are candidates for a septal straightening, (septoplasty), or a turbinate reduction procedure. Surgical procedures are also available in treatment for chronic sinusitis, nasal polyps, and tumors with far less invasive approaches.

To correct misshaped noses, a surgery called rhinoplasty or "nose job" is available.

All noses are different and need to be surgically treated differently. The most difficult cosmetic surgical procedure is the rhinoplasty. You can perform the surgery perfectly and still have an unexpected result due to healing irregularities. When someone desires the need of cosmetic or functional septorhinoplasty make sure your surgeon has a long sustained history of many good results. A good benchmark of the surgeon is that he or she is a member of the American Academy of Facial Plastics and Reconstructive Surgery or has similar credentials.

The concept of perceived nasal aesthetic beauty has changed through the ages. Egyptians in their concept of nasal appearance show in their artworks to have the forehead and nose share the same slope as if they are one. Their noses, thought to be beautiful, showed few contours between the nose and forehead on profiles. When I trained in the 1970's the concept of a beautiful nose was one that had a "supratip break". There was a gentle concavity

between the tip of the nose and the dorsum of the nose. Few if any noses were born with this distinction, and it was almost as if the surgeon was trying to separate the tip of the nose and its cartilages as a distinction from the rest of the nose. Nasal aesthetics today are more like the Egyptian nose with a long slender, aqualine appearance without a supratip break, but separate from the forehead. When looking at actors, actresses and models today, noses that have that appearance are deemed beautiful.

If one needs or desires to have nasal reconstruction how do you proceed? Make sure the surgeon is qualified to provide both functional and cosmetic quality results. Request photos of former patients and ask what changes your surgeon plans for your nose.

Nasal surgery is much improved today from proceeding years in the fact that seldom is nasal packing required. The surgery is performed on an outpatient bases with general anesthesia usually requiring one to two hours in the operating room. My personal preference is an "open" approach with a delicate incision on the mid portion of the base of the nose, the columella or the portion of the nose between nostrils. The incisions along with internal incisions allow direct access to all component parts of the nose which can be changed to reconstruct for function and aesthetics. Healing of the external incision is within one to two weeks and frequently invisible. If bruising or swelling is minimal the patient can be presentable and can return to work within that time.

So when you think about your nose and if dissatisfied about its appearance and function or both, then you are not alone. Nine out of ten of those around you share your sentiments. Seek consultation with a qualified nasal surgeon. Results can be both gratifying from appearance and breathing and often life changing in self esteem and quality of life. Better sleeping habits breed better daily functions and nasal breathing and nasal beauty are so important to that end.

Yours in Good Health,
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