

Nasal fractures (broken nose)

You have been treated in the Emergency Department with a nasal fracture. This leaflet gives advice on how to care for your fracture at home.

How is a nasal fracture diagnosed?

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 this condition due to the difficult imaging of these bones (plain films miss approximately 50% of fractures). Therefore, the management of nasal injuries is guided only by the clinical findings. If any X-rays are deemed necessary, it is only for suspected involvement of other important facial structures such as eye orbits, cheek bones, 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 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 Nasal Fracture Clinic within 6-14 days. This is when the reduction (resetting) of the broken nose usually takes place. This manipulation is performed **after** the initial soft tissue swelling has settled.

How long 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.

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question – ‘Overall, how was your experience of our service?’ – by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-in-touch/friends-and-family-survey.htm.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Emergency Department.

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