

Chapter 3. Patient Education and Consent

It should go without saying that patients undergoing rhinoplasty should be cognizant of the nature, benefits, and risks of the procedure. They should also be aware of the timeline for healing and the need to wait a minimum of 1 year before deciding that a reoperation is required. The surgeon should understand the patient's specific anatomy and particular concerns. These should be valid and consistent. The risks of each component of the planned operation should be reviewed with the patient in detail. Drawings are frequently helpful for the patient to understand the finer technicalities and to serve as a record of the detailed interaction. Preoperative photographs in standard AP, oblique, lateral, and worm's eye views should be obtained. These should also be reviewed with the patient. Software can also be used to manipulate digital images in order to provide the patient with an example of the post-surgical result. A standard consent might have similar elements to the example given below:

INFORMED CONSENT— RHINOPLASTY SURGERY

INSTRUCTIONS

The following document is an informed-consent form that has been prepared to help your plastic surgeon inform you about the nature, benefits, risks, and alternatives to rhinoplasty surgery. It is important that you read this information carefully and completely. Each page should be initialed to indicate that you have read the page and sign the consent for surgery as proposed by your surgeon.

INTRODUCTION

Rhinoplasty surgery is designed and performed to reshape or improve the function of the nose. The techniques utilized may produce changes in the appearance, structure, and function of the nose. They may reduce or increase the size of the nose or change the shape of the various components of the nose, including—but not limited to—the

dorsum, tip, and nostrils. They may also change the relationship of the nose to surrounding structures, including—but not limited to—the cheeks, the eyes, and the upper lip. Rhinoplasty may be indicated to correct congenital birth defects, acquired deformities, traumatic injuries, and/or functional problems with breathing. The techniques of rhinoplasty are customized for each patient and are not identical in all patients. The techniques may be performed using either incisions outside the nose or inside the nose, or a combination of the two. Patients interested in undergoing a rhinoplasty procedure should have realistic expectations and not expect perfection. They should also be in good physical and emotional health. Rhinoplasty can be performed in conjunction with other surgeries.

RISK OF RHINOPLASTY SURGERY

With any type of surgery there is inherent risk. It is always an option not to undergo the rhinoplasty surgery. An individual's choice to undergo any particular surgical procedure is based on the comparison of the risks and potential benefit. Although the majority of patients do not experience these complications, you should discuss each of them with your plastic surgeon to make sure you understand the risks, potential complications, and consequences of rhinoplasty. Infrequently, it is necessary to perform additional surgery to improve your result.

- **Bleeding**—It is possible, though unusual, that you may have problem with bleeding during or after surgery. Should postoperative bleeding occur, it may require emergency treatment to stop the bleeding, or require a blood transfusion. Do not take any aspirin or anti-inflammatory medications for 2 weeks before surgery, as this contributes to a greater risk of bleeding. Hypertension (high blood pressure) that is not under good medical control may cause bleeding during or after surgery. Accumulations of blood under the skin may delay healing and cause scarring.
- **Infection**—Infection following rhinoplasty is rare. Management usually involves a course of antibiotic therapy but may also necessitate a return to the

operating room for irrigation and/or debridement of infected tissue.

- Scarring—Although good wound healing after a surgical procedure is expected, abnormal scars may occur both within the skin and the deeper tissues. Scars may be unattractive and of different color than the surrounding skin. There is the possibility of visible marks from sutures. Additional treatments including surgery may be needed to treat scarring.
- Damage to deeper structures—Deeper structures such as nerves, tear ducts, blood vessels, and muscles may be damaged during the course of surgery. The potential for this to occur varies with the type of rhinoplasty procedure performed. Injury to deeper structures may be temporary or permanent.
- Nasal septal perforation—There is the possibility that surgery will cause a hole in the nasal septum to develop. This occurrence is rare. However, if it occurs, additional surgical treatment may be necessary to repair the hole in the nasal septum. In some cases, it may be impossible to correct this complication.
- Unsatisfactory result—There is the possibility of an unsatisfactory result from the rhinoplasty surgery. The surgery may result in unacceptable visible or tactile deformities, loss of function, or structural malposition after rhinoplasty surgery. You may be disappointed that the results of rhinoplasty surgery do not meet your expectations. Additional surgery may be necessary should the desired result of rhinoplasty not persist after surgery.
- Numbness—There is the potential for permanent numbness within the nasal skin after rhinoplasty. The occurrence of this is not predictable. Diminished (or loss of skin sensation) in the nasal area may not totally resolve rhinoplasty.
- Asymmetry—The human face is normally asymmetrical. There can be a variation from one side to the other in the results obtained from a rhinoplasty procedure.
- Chronic pain—Chronic pain may occur very infrequently after rhinoplasty.
- Allergic reactions—In rare cases, local allergies to tape, suture material, or topical preparations have been reported. Systemic reactions, which are more serious, may occur to drugs used during surgery and prescription medicines. Allergic reactions may require additional treatment.
- Delayed healing—Wound disruption or delayed wound healing is possible. Some areas of the face may not heal normally and may take a long time to heal. Areas of skin may die. This may require frequent dressing changes or further surgery to remove the non-healed tissue.
- Long-term effects—Subsequent alterations in nasal appearance may occur as the result of aging, sun exposure, or other circumstances not related to rhinoplasty surgery. Future surgery or other treatments may be necessary to maintain the results of a rhinoplasty operation.

- Nasal airway alteration—Changes may occur after a rhinoplasty or septoplasty operation that may interfere with normal passage of air through the nose.
- Surgical anesthesia—Both local and general anesthesia involve risk. There is the possibility of complications, injury, and even death from all forms of surgical anesthesia or sedation.

ADDITIONAL ADVISORIES

Deep Venous Thrombosis and Pulmonary Complications: Surgery, especially longer procedures, may be associated with the formation of blood clots in the venous system. Complications may occur secondarily if blood clots (pulmonary emboli), or fat deposits (fat emboli), travel to the lungs. Pulmonary and fat emboli can be life threatening or fatal in some circumstances. Air travel, inactivity, and other conditions may increase the incidence of blood clots travelling to the lungs causing a major blood clot that may result in death. It is important to discuss with your plastic surgeon any past history of blood clots or swollen legs that may contribute to this condition.

Smoking, Second-Hand Smoke Exposure, Nicotine Products (Patch, Gum, Nasal Spray): Patients who are currently smoking, use tobacco products, or nicotine products (patch, gum, or nasal spray) are at a greater risk for significant surgical complications of skin necrosis, delayed healing, and additional scarring. Individuals exposed to second-hand smoke are also at potential risk for similar complications attributable to nicotine exposure. Additionally, smokers may have a significant negative effect on anesthesia and recovery from anesthesia, with coughing and possibly increased bleeding. It is important to refrain from smoking at least 6 weeks before surgery and until your physician states it is safe to return, if desired.

Information Specific to Female Patients: It is important to inform your plastic surgeon if you use birth control pills or estrogen replacement, or if you believe you may be pregnant. Many medications including antibiotics may neutralize the preventive effect of birth control pills, allowing for conception and pregnancy.

Medications: Numerous adverse reactions may occur as the result of taking over-the-counter and/or prescription medications and/or herbal supplements. Be sure to check with your plastic surgeon about any drug interactions that may exist with medications you are already taking. If you have an adverse reaction, stop the drugs immediately and call your plastic surgeon for further instructions. If the reaction is severe, go immediately to the nearest emergency room. When taking the prescribed pain medications after surgery, realize that they can affect your thought process. Do not drive, do not operate complex equipment, do not make any important decisions, and do not drink any alcohol while taking these medications. Be sure to take your prescribed medication only as directed.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Most insurance companies exclude coverage for cosmetic surgical operations or any complications that might occur from cosmetic surgery. If the procedure corrects a breathing problem or marked deformity after a nasal fracture, a portion may be covered. Please carefully review your health insurance subscriber policy.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The total cost of surgery involves several component charges for the services provided. The total cost includes your surgeon's fee, your anesthesiologist's fee, and outpatient facility charges, as well as possible additional laboratory charges. Depending on whether the cost of surgery is covered by an insurance plan, you will be responsible for necessary co-payments, deductibles, and charges not covered. Additional costs may occur should complications develop from the surgery. Secondary surgery or hospital day surgery charges involved with revisionary surgery would also be your responsibility.

PATIENT COMPLIANCE

All instructions given by your physician should be carefully followed to maximize the success of your outcome. It is important that the surgical incisions are not subjected to excessive force, swelling, abrasion, or motion during the time of healing. Physical activity needs to be restricted. Surgery involves clotting of blood vessels and increased activity of any kind may open these vessels, leading to a bleed, or hematoma. Increased activity that raises your pulse or heart rate may cause additional bruising, swelling, and the need for return to surgery and control of bleeding. It is wise to refrain from physical exertion

(including sexual activity) until your physician determines it is safe. Protective dressings and drains should not be removed unless instructed by your plastic surgeon. Successful postoperative function depends on both surgery and subsequent care. It is important that you participate in follow-up care, return for aftercare, and promote your recovery after surgery.

DISCLAIMER

Informed-consent documents are used to communicate information about the proposed surgical treatment of a disease or condition along with disclosure of risks and alternative forms of treatment(s). This document is based on a thorough evaluation of scientific literature and relevant clinic practice to describe a range of generally acceptable risks and alternative forms of management of a particular disease or condition. The informed-consent process attempts to define principles of risk disclosure that should generally meet the needs of most patients in most circumstances. However, informed-consent documents should not be considered all inclusive in defining other methods of care and risks encountered. Your plastic surgeon may provide you with additional or different information that is based on all the facts in your particular case and the state of medical knowledge. Informed-consent documents are not intended to define or serve as the standard of medical care. Standards of medical care are determined on the basis of all of the facts involved in an individual case and are subject to change as scientific knowledge and technology advance and as practice patterns evolve. This informed-consent document reflects the state of knowledge current at the time of publication. It is important that you have read the above information carefully and have all of your questions answered before signing the consent.



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