



GEORGIA  
CENTER *for*  
Ear, Nose & Throat  
FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

## Septoplasty

- Septoplasty is a surgical procedure that's done to fix a deviated nasal septum. A deviated septum occurs when the cartilage that separates your nostrils is out of position. This can cause breathing problems, nosebleeds, and pain.
- The main goal of septoplasty is to correct the alignment of your septum in order to improve airflow through your nose.
- Septoplasty is typically an outpatient procedure and can be done under either local or general anesthesia.

The septum is the wall of bone and cartilage that divides your nose into two separate nostrils. A deviated septum occurs when your septum is moved to one side of your nose. Some people are born with a deviated septum, but it can also be caused by an injury to your nose. Most people with a deviated septum have one nasal passage that's much smaller than the other. This can cause difficulty breathing. Other symptoms of a deviated septum may include frequent nosebleeds and facial pain. Surgery is the only way to fix a deviated septum.

Septoplasty is a surgical procedure to correct a deviated septum. Septoplasty straightens the septum, allowing for better airflow through your nose.

## **Preparing for a Septoplasty**

Dr. Fletcher may ask you to stop taking certain medications two weeks before the surgery. These medications may include aspirin, ibuprofen, and other blood thinners. This is done to reduce your risk of excessive bleeding during and after the procedure. Be sure to tell your Dr. Fletcher if you're allergic to certain medications or if you have a history of bleeding problems.

Dr. Fletcher may take pictures of your nose before the procedure. Comparing photos from before and after the procedure can help you see how your nose has changed.

In some cases, people have a septoplasty under local anesthesia, which numbs the area to prevent pain. However, most people have the surgery under general anesthesia, which means they're asleep during the procedure. Don't eat or drink anything after midnight the night before the procedure if you're going to be under general anesthesia. This will help prevent you from vomiting and choking if you become nauseated from the anesthesia during surgery.

Bring a family member or friend who can drive you home after the septoplasty. General anesthesia may make you drowsy after the procedure. You shouldn't drive until the effects have fully worn off.

## **Septoplasty Procedure**

A septoplasty takes anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes to complete, depending on the complexity of the condition. You'll be under either local or general anesthesia, depending on what you and Dr. Fletcher decide is best for you.

In a typical procedure, the surgeon will make an incision on one side of your nose to access the septum. They'll then lift up the mucous membrane, which is the protective covering of the septum. Then, the deviated septum will be moved into the right position. Any barriers, such as extra pieces of bone or cartilage, will be removed. The last step is the repositioning of the mucous membrane.

You may need stitches to hold the septum and membrane in place. However, packing the nose with cotton is sometimes enough to keep them in position.

## Recovering from a Septoplasty

Septoplasty is usually performed as an outpatient procedure unless major complications arise. This means that you'll be able to go home on the same day as the procedure, once the anesthesia has worn off. Your nose will be swollen, painful, and packed with cotton to control bleeding.

The packing can be removed a day or two after surgery. Dr. Fletcher will also prescribe pain medication as needed.

Your doctor will likely ask you to avoid aspirin, ibuprofen, and other drugs that thin the blood. This is done to lower the risk of bleeding problems after the procedure.

You should also limit your physical activity for several weeks after surgery to minimize swelling and promote healing. This includes most forms of intense exercise, such as running, lifting weights, and playing contact sports. These activities can increase your blood pressure and lead to heavy bleeding.

Tips for a quicker recovery include:

- elevating your head at night to keep the swelling down
- not blowing your nose for at least three days after surgery
- wearing shirts that button up in the front so you won't have to pull clothing over your head

The wound on your nose will heal fairly quickly, and your breathing is likely to improve shortly after the procedure. However, the overall healing process can be slow. Cartilage and other nasal tissues can take up to a year to fully settle into their new shape.

Most people experience no ongoing symptoms after the surgery. In some cases, however, the cartilage and nasal tissues continue to shift over time and eventually block airflow through the nose again. This means that a second surgery will be needed to reshape the nose and septum further.