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Rhinoplasty – Postoperative Instructions

Thank you for trusting Careaga Plastic Surgery with your rhinoplasty procedure. These guidelines will help you recover safely and achieve the best possible results. Please review them carefully and contact our office with any questions or concerns.

Medications You Must Take

- Antibiotic – Cephalexin (or Clindamycin if allergic to penicillin): Start the first dose the night of your surgery. Take as prescribed to prevent infection.
- Steroid pack (Medrol Dose Pack – methylprednisolone): Start the morning after surgery. Follow the instructions printed on the package. Helps minimize swelling and inflammation.

Medications You Can Take if Needed

1. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) – for mild to moderate pain.
2. Hydrocodone or Tylenol #3 – for stronger pain, every 6 hours as needed. Take with a stool softener to prevent constipation. If pain is controlled, it's best to take only Tylenol. **IF YOU ARE TAKING TYLENOL #3, you can only take up to 500mg of acetaminophen every 6 hours**
3. Ondansetron (Zofran) – for nausea, every 6 hours as needed.
4. Stool softener – take daily while using prescription pain medication.
5. Mupirocin ointment – see cleaning instructions below for use.

The Night of Your Surgery

- Sleep with your head elevated at 30–45°, using two pillows or a recliner.
- Keep your nasal splint and dressings dry and intact.
- Change the drip pad as needed; mild bloody drainage is normal for 24–48 hours.
- Soft diet: shakes, soups, and low-sodium foods are best.
- Take your first antibiotic dose that evening after eating.
- Do not apply ice directly to the nose or face.

The Morning After Surgery and the First Week

- Continue sleeping with your head elevated for 2–3 days (preferably up to 2 weeks).
- Begin your Medrol Dose Pack in the morning.
- You may shower from the neck down the next day; wash your face gently after 48 hours.



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- Keep splint and tapes dry.
- Expect swelling, congestion, and mild bruising around the eyes. This is normal and will gradually improve.
- Avoid bending forward, heavy lifting, or blowing your nose.
- Start saline nasal spray 8–10 times daily to keep nasal passages moist.

Cleaning Instructions (Start the Day After Surgery)

- Hydrogen Peroxide Cleaning: Use a Q-tip dipped in hydrogen peroxide to gently clean the inner rim of your nostrils and any visible sutures. Do not insert the Q-tip deeper than the cotton tip. Clean 3 times daily to remove dried blood and crusts.
- Mupirocin Ointment: Apply a thin layer inside each nostril and over the columellar incision after each cleaning. Keep incisions moist at all times. Continue this routine until your splint is removed (about 1 week after surgery).

After Splints Removal (1 Week and Beyond)

- Continue gentle cleaning and mupirocin application for another 2–3 weeks.
- Do not blow your nose for 6 weeks.
- If you have allergies, use Flonase or Nasacort (2 sprays per nostril morning and night) for 6–8 weeks.
- Re-apply nasal tape as directed for 3–6 weeks after splint removal. Replace tape every 5–7 days. It's okay if it gets wet during showers.

Activity Guidelines

- Avoid strenuous activity, bending forward, or lifting >10 lb (4.5 kg) for 3 weeks.
- No glasses or sunglasses resting on the nose for 6 weeks (use cheek support if necessary).
- Avoid smoking or vaping—it delays healing.
- You may resume light walking after 1 week and gentle exercise after 3–4 weeks (with clearance).
- No saunas, hot tubs, or swimming for 6 weeks.
- Avoid direct sunlight on the nose for 3 months; use SPF 50 when outdoors.

Follow-Up Visits

- 1–2 days after surgery: dressing and drip pad check.
- 1 week post-op: splint and suture removal.
- Subsequent visits: at 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year.



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When to Call the Office

- Sudden increase in pain, swelling, or nasal obstruction.
- Persistent bleeding or foul-smelling drainage.
- Fever over 101°F (38.3°C).
- Discoloration or skin blistering around the nose.
- Shortness of breath or chest pain.

If urgent symptoms occur after hours, go to the nearest emergency room.