

# Suspected broken nose (nasal fracture)

## Information for patients



### Emergency Department

#### King's Mill Hospital

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# Overview

A broken nose is common, especially after a fall, a sports injury, or a fight. The bones in your nose are the ones in your face that are most often broken because they stick out and do not have a lot of support. Bony fractures of the nose account for nearly 50% of all facial fractures.

## What are the signs and symptoms of a broken nose?

- Obvious deformity/deviation of the nose.
- Instability and clicking (crepitus).
- Skin cuts (lacerations).
- Swelling/bruising around the nose.
- Nosebleed.
- Obstructed nasal passages (blocked nose).
- Discharge of clear watery fluid from one nostril.

## How is a nasal fracture diagnosed?

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 thought to be necessary, it is only for suspected involvement of other important facial structures such as eye orbits, cheek bones, jaw bones.

## How is a broken nose managed?

This largely depends on clinical findings.

Your nose will be examined in the Emergency department or an Urgent Treatment Centre depending where you present, to ensure there is no collection of blood (haematoma) in the septum of your nose (the midline structure that divides the nostrils), no active bleeding and that you are able to breathe through both nostrils.

## In cases of simple, uncomplicated fractures you will be advised to:

- Use ice packs (frozen peas in a damp towel will do) for 10 minutes, three or four times a day.
- Take tablets such as ibuprofen or paracetamol to relieve the pain. Ibuprofen should be used with caution if you suffer from asthma or stomach ulcers. Always read guidance on usage when taking any medication.
- Please contact the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) department (contact numbers at the end of this leaflet) only if your nose is bent or if your nasal passages feel blocked five days after the nose injury (once the swelling has gone down). ENT will arrange for a follow up appointment to assess your nose and decide whether you need an operation to reset your broken nose. If you need an operation, this will be arranged for you by the ENT team about one to two weeks after your injury.
- You **SHOULD NOT** blow your nose as it may bleed.

## If your nose starts to bleed you should:

- Sit down calmly on a chair with your head down and the bowl in your lap.
- Press firmly on all the soft part of your nose, just below the bony part. You will not benefit from squeezing the bony part.
- Press firmly and continuously, almost to the point of discomfort, for at least 10 minutes while breathing through an open mouth.
- Spit out any blood in your mouth into the bowl.
- If, despite this, the bleeding continues, then continue to press on the soft part of your nose, but also apply a cold compress to your forehead. You can use some ice wrapped in a towel for this. The cold compress will reduce the supply of blood to the nose.
- **AVOID HOT DRINKS** as this may start the bleeding again.
- **DO NOT** pick or attempt to remove any clots once formed.
- **If the bleeding continues**, or you feel faint, then go to your **nearest Emergency Department**, taking any medication with you.

# How long before the fracture heals?

Fractured nasal bones usually heal within two to three 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.

## Contact details

If you need further information about your **ENT appointment**, please contact the ENT team secretaries via switchboard. The telephone number is 01623 622515.

## Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

## Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

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