

## Sinus Surgery

Sinus surgery is performed when someone who has chronic sinus infections is not responding to traditional or home remedies anymore. Typically, a sinus infection responds well to simple home remedies such as nasal saline solution use, warm air humidifiers and drinking plenty of fluids. When that doesn't work, your ENT doctor will usually utilize medications such as antibiotics and antihistamines. If you find that even that doesn't work to fully cure your sinus infection and it persists for much longer than is usual, or that you have recurrent sinus infections, you may be diagnosed with chronic sinus infections, also called sinus disease or chronic rhinosinusitis. Usually this diagnosis comes when you have at least three consecutive months of sinus infections that either recur or do not completely clear before flaring up again. At that point, to give you some relief, a leading NYC otolaryngologist will probably recommend sinus surgery.

### Which Sinus Surgery is Right for You?

There are three different sinus surgery procedures available to your ENT specialist, depending on your exact issue. Chronic sinus infections can stem from a variety of issues, including bacteria, viruses, nasal polyps or anatomy issues, like a deviated septum. The success of your surgery depends on what is causing your sinus infections.

- **Functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS)** has been around since the 1950's. It is used when the nasal passages are too narrow to allow excess mucus that develops with infection to drain fully. A back-up of mucus occurs in a wad, leading to an infection in the sinus cavity as more mucus gets stopped up. Functional endoscopic sinus surgery involves using a mini-telescope that is inserted into the nasal passages so that those blockages can be removed and the nasal passages widened, allowing for better drainage.
- **Image guided surgery** is used when the sinus anatomy is considered unusual or when previous sinus surgery has left the nasal passages changed in some way, causing them to be challenging to navigate. For this reason, computed tomography scans (CT) and real-time information from a three-dimensional system are used so your ENT specialist can see exactly what he is doing and can expertly guide the instruments to perform the same tasks involved in performing an FESS.
- **Caldwell Luc operation** goes about freeing your sinuses in a different manner altogether. In this instance, the maxillary sinus cavity below the eye is the doctor's focus. He will go in through the upper jaw above one of your molars, creating a window that will connect your maxillary sinus with your nasal passages. This connection will allow better drainage of your sinuses and improve your sinus health.

## **Before, During and After Surgery**

Before surgery instructions will vary from doctor to doctor, but most will recommend you not take any medications that may have the side effect of thinning your blood for two weeks before your surgery date. That will include over the counter medications like aspirin and ibuprofen, as well as certain vitamins and supplements. Make sure your ENT specialist has a complete list of the medications you are taking before surgery. If you have not done so already, you will probably need a CT scan to determine which of your sinuses need to be operated on.

During surgery, the doctor may use either local anesthesia or general anesthesia, depending on your procedure. Most people have a total of eight sinuses, four on each side, and any of them can be the cause of your sinus issues. If you have a deviated septum, your otolaryngologist may also straighten the septum and even out the space in your nasal passages at the same time. Lastly, if your turbinates, the filters in your nose, are not functioning properly, your ENT doctor may take the time to perform surgery on them at that time. Surgery typically only takes one to two hours and is performed on an out-patient basis, meaning you will go home the same day.

After endoscopic surgery, your recovery time is better and less damage is done to your sinus passages than with previous types of sinus surgeries. The endoscope used is light, narrow and flexible, minimizing pain and discomfort after surgery. More than likely, packing your nasal passages with cotton afterwards will not be necessary.

## **Risks and Side Effects of Sinus Surgery**

As with all surgeries, there are risks to having your sinuses operated on, as they are right below your brain and surround your eye sockets. Possible complications include damaging your eye sight, problems or complications with anesthesia, bleeding and intracranial complications relating to the brain. All of these are rare. The other side of the risk equation is the potential for infections creeping up and into the brain and eyes if you do not have surgery for chronic rhinosinusitis.

## **Recovering from Endoscopic Surgery**

Post-surgery instructions from your ENT specialist will likely include:

- **Keep an eye on your bleeding.** Remember those blood thinners you had to stop taking before surgery? More than likely, you will not be able to go back on them right away either. Your surgeon will tell you when it's ok to take them again. If mild bleeding occurs, which is expected the first three to five days post-surgery, the important thing is not to panic. Try to keep breathing deeply as best you can. Simply hold a cloth or tissue at the opening of your nose and wait for it to stop.
- **Monitor your pain.** In fact, nasal and sinus pressure is to be expected for at least a few days. Expect to take a week or so off from work until you feel better. You can use either a prescription or extra-strength Tylenol, but again, due to blood thinning, you should steer clear of NSAIDs like Aleve, Midol and Iburprofen.

- **Expect to be tired.** This is typical and nothing to be worried about. Rest as much as you can the first week after surgery.
- **Nasal congestion and discharge is perfectly normal.** Now that your nasal passages are nice and wide and blockages have been cleared, it should come as no surprise that your sinuses will be draining during this time. It will take up to three weeks for congestion to ease and breathing to return to normal. Your NYC ENT doctor may advise you to use Afrin nasal spray, but it may only be used for the first two days of recovery. It is important to follow your doctor's directions to the letter regarding the use of steroidal or decongestant nasal spray that is being applied directly to your nasal passages, especially just after surgery.
- **Follow up with your doctor.** The best Manhattan otolaryngologist will definitely want to follow up after surgery to make sure you are healing well, to address any concerns you may have as well as to remove any packing or stints that may have been used and thoroughly clean out your sinuses.