



rhinoplasty FAQs

Sydney facial plastic surgeon **Dr Shahram Shahidi** answers some of the most commonly asked questions about nasal surgery. Caroline Warnes reports.



What is rhinoplasty?

Rhinoplasty, or nasal surgery, is commonly known as a 'nose job'. It is surgery to improve the appearance or repair the function of the nose. In rhinoplasty, the surgeon seeks to create a more harmonious facial appearance whilst maintaining or improving breathing.

Why do people have rhinoplasty?

Sydney facial plastic surgeon Dr Shahram Shahidi believes that no one feature affects the way you look quite as much as your nose. If it is too big, too wide or too long, it can dominate your face. If it is crooked or humped, it may detract from otherwise pleasing facial features. Maybe your nose has been broken, or it may be pointing downwards, or maybe it appears large because the chin is small.

You may not be satisfied with any number of things about the nose you were born with, so if your nose is not in harmony with rest of your facial features or you have trouble breathing, you may be a candidate for rhinoplasty.

What's the best age to have rhinoplasty?

Surgery to refine the appearance of the nose is best done after you have finished growing. This usually means the minimum age is 15 to 16 years of age for girls and 17 to 18 for boys. After this time nasal surgery can be performed at any age, as long as you are in good health.

Will it improve my breathing and sinuses?

If your initial consultation with the doctor reveals obstruction in your nose that is causing breathing

difficulties or if you are suffering from sinus problems, rhinoplasty can be combined with septal or sinus surgery. These procedures can improve both the function and the appearance of your nose.

What does the procedure involve?

Generally, rhinoplasty is performed under general anaesthetic in a day surgery setting. There are two main techniques used by surgeons in nasal surgery: 'closed' rhinoplasty and 'open' rhinoplasty.

Closed rhinoplasty involves incisions confined to the inside of your nose, just inside the rim of each nostril. Working through these incisions, the surgeon can shave away excess bone and cartilage to reduce a hump, reposition cartilage or narrow the nasal bones.

Open rhinoplasty involves a small incision across the columella, between the nostrils, in addition to incisions on the inside of your nose. Open surgery is usually preferred in more complicated cases.

To reduce flaring nostrils, additional incisions may be made on each side of the nose where the nostrils join the face. If these incisions are made, they are usually undetectable when they heal. The nasal bones may need to be incised and a controlled fracture may be made by your surgeon so the bones can be moved inward, narrowing the nasal bones.

After correcting the framework of the nose, the skin is redraped and the cuts are usually closed with absorbable sutures. A small splint is applied to the outside of the nose and a dressing material may be placed inside the nose.

What can I expect after surgery?

Nasal surgery is not a particularly painful operation. Most patients complain of stuffiness, an inability to breathe through the nose, facial puffiness and black eyes.

Bedrest on a few pillows is recommended for the first two to three days. Most patients will be prescribed painkilling medication and antibiotics. After around one week, the dressings are normally removed from the outside and inside of the nose. Swelling and bruising of the nose and eyes will peak two to three days after surgery, but gradually subside after seven to ten days. By day 10, swelling and bruising should have improved. In some cases, the nose may be slightly swollen for several months.

Your nose will continue to settle and improve over the next few months.

How long do I need to take off work?

Most patients need 10 to 14 days to recover.

Can I choose the nose I want?

After discussing your concerns, your surgeon will evaluate your face, examine your skin and your bone structure, and photographs of your face will be taken. Then your surgeon will advise you as to what is a realistic outcome.

Most rhinoplasty surgeons use computer imaging. According to Dr Shahidi, computer software is a very useful communication tool. You can express your wishes as to how you would like your nose to look and your surgeon will advise you on whether your request is realistic or possible.

Remember that computer imaging is intended only to help you visualise an intended change. It cannot predict actual surgical results. Your surgical outcome depends on many factors, including your underlying bone structure, the quality of cartilage, the texture of your skin and your healing capacity.

'There are two main techniques used in nasal surgery: "closed" rhinoplasty and "open" rhinoplasty'

How much does it cost? Can I claim a refund?

Rhinoplasty generally costs upwards of \$5,000. There are also extra charges for the use of the day surgery facility and the anaesthetist. If you have had rhinoplasty for a functional reason, such as breathing difficulties through your nose or after an accident, you may be eligible for a Medicare and health fund rebate. You may also be eligible for a tax refund. Speak to your accountant for more information about this.

How do I choose a doctor?

As with any cosmetic procedure, you should undergo careful research before deciding which surgeon to consult. Should the consultation lead to surgery, your satisfaction with the results will depend on the training, technical expertise and the artistic skills of the surgeon you have chosen. **acsm**