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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Nasal Trauma Advice Sheet

(For use alongside the head injury advice sheet)

You have been treated in the Emergency Department (ED) or Minor Injury Unit (MIU) with a broken nose (nasal fracture).

This leaflet gives advice on how to care for your fracture at home.

Diagnosing a broken nose (nasal fracture)

Diagnosis is largely through clinical examination. The nasal bones are the most commonly broken bones of the face due to their exposed position and limited structural support. X-rays are not usually helpful in diagnosing a broken nose but may be performed to look for fractures of other facial bones.

Signs that suggest a nose may be broken after injury include obvious change in nose shape, wobbling, crunching noises, swelling, bruising, nosebleed, and blocked nose.

Swelling soon after injury can make it difficult to tell if a nose is broken and whether the broken bones have moved out of their normal position. If the nasal bones have broken but not moved out of their normal position, they will heal with no change to the overall shape of the nose.

Looking after my broken nose

Your MIU or ED nurse practitioner or doctor will examine your nose to check that you can breathe through both nostrils and that there is no blood-filled swelling in the partition between the two nostrils, active bleeding, or leak of fluid (Cerebrospinal fluid) from around the brain.

What to do:

- Use ice packs and take regular painkillers.
- If you have been given antibiotics, please complete the full course.
- Keep any wounds dry until they have fully healed up. Any stitches should be taken out by your GP practice nurse after 5-7 days. You will need to book this appointment with your GP practice receptionist.
- Avoid re-injury of the nose – no contact sports for 3 weeks to allow healing.

Minor Injury Unit (MIU)/ Emergency Department (ED):

Royal Gwent Hospital MIU: 01633 234056

Nevill Hall Hospital MIU: 01873 732073

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU: 01443 802353

Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318

Grange University Hospital (GUH) ED: 01633 493287

Any swelling will start to settle a few days after the injury. The bones usually stabilise within 10 days and will set in place and heal in 2-3 weeks. Follow-up in the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) department may need to be arranged (see follow-up section – Page 2).

Nose bleeds (epistaxis)

Nose bleeds are common after a nasal injury. If bleeding occurs, you should lean forward and pinch the soft part of your nose (closing both nostrils) tightly between finger and thumb. You should do this **without letting go for at least 15 minutes**. Spit out any blood that runs into the mouth, as swallowed blood can irritate the stomach and make you feel sick. If bleeding fails to stop, continue to hold the nose and return to ED/MIU.

Rare complications of nose injury

- **Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leak**

Clear watery discharge from one nostril after injury can indicate a leak of fluid (CSF) from around the brain into the nose. This will put you at risk of meningitis. You should return to ED at the Grange University hospital (GUH) and not MIU if you have this symptom.

- **Septal haematoma** (blood-filled swelling in the partition between the two nostrils)

A septal haematoma may be present if you become feverish or develop a purple swelling in the nose that may be painful or cause the nose to feel blocked. Left untreated, a septal haematoma can destroy the cartilage of the nose causing permanent deformity. If you have symptoms of septal haematoma, you should return to ED at the GUH and not MIU to have your nose re-assessed.

Follow-up

3 - 4 days after the initial injury to your nose, look in the mirror:

- Is your nose obviously misshapen and out of place?
- Is it difficult to breathe through either nostril independently?

If you answered yes to either of the above questions you may benefit from an operation to straighten your nose, called manipulation under anaesthesia, which will require an in-person appointment.

You should call the ENT Treatment Room on 01633 234018 (0800-1200, Monday-Friday, except bank holidays) to book an appointment. Your appointment should be booked no later than 6 days after your injury, and any required operation should occur within 2-3 weeks of injury.

If surgery is delayed, it may not be possible to reset the nose under a short anaesthetic as the bones will set fully. A larger procedure may then be required to achieve the same results.

If you are happy with the shape of your nose and have no trouble breathing, then you will not require an appointment.

If you have any concerns with regards to your head injury, please contact or go to the Emergency Department at the Grange University hospital and not the Minor Injury Unit for further assessment.

**This document is available in Welsh/
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**