

# Nasal Polyps

## Information for Patients

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### What are nasal polyps?

Nasal polyps are common, swellings of the lining of the inside of the nose or the sinuses.

### What causes them?

Allergies or infections may have a role to play. Polyps are more common in asthmatics and those who are sensitive to aspirin. They are rare in children.

### What symptoms do they cause?

Common symptoms:

- A blocked nose
- A discharge from the front of the nose, or from the back of the nose down into the throat
- A poor sense of smell or taste

Less common symptoms:

- headaches or a feeling of pressure or pain in the face
- snoring
- they may be present without causing any symptoms whatsoever

Polyps can also lead to bouts of sinus infections if they are blocking the channels in the nose which drain the sinuses.

### How are they diagnosed?

Nasal polyps are diagnosed by looking into the nose with a light or a small camera called an endoscope.

### What treatments are available?

#### Medicines

Nasal drops or sprays containing a steroid are often very effective at shrinking polyps. However, it may take up to a month of regular treatment before there is any noticeable improvement in symptoms. Often patients express some concern when asked to take medicines containing steroids. However, when used in the nose in the prescribed amounts, very little steroid is actually absorbed into the body and so the nasal preparations rarely cause the kinds of problems associated with taking steroids in tablet or injection form.

#### Surgery

Polyps that are very large or do not respond to the above treatment can be removed under a general anaesthetic. If the sinuses are also involved the surgeon may in addition perform a procedure to open up the channels which connect the sinuses to the nose. These procedures are usually carried out

entirely from within the nose using a small camera called an endoscope which lets the surgeon view the polyps, the whole of the inside of the nose and the openings of the sinus channels which drain into it. Usually you will get home the same day but you may have to stay in hospital for one night after the operation to ensure that all the bleeding has stopped. You are advised to take 2 weeks off work following this procedure.

### **Is it true that polyps can grow back?**

Yes, sometimes, although this usually takes months or years and can often be delayed or prevented by continuing with long-term steroid nasal sprays.

Some patients will however require further surgery.

### **Cancellation**

While we make every effort to avoid this where possible, there is always a risk that your operation may be cancelled at short notice. This is due to either emergency patients who require urgent surgery or other reasons which are beyond our control. We realise that this can cause distress and inconvenience, but in the event that your surgery is postponed, you will be offered a new date as soon as possible.

### **Keeping your Appointment**

If you cannot keep your appointment, or have been given one that is unsuitable, please change it by phoning the number on your appointment letter. Your call will give someone else the chance to be seen and will help us keep waiting times to a minimum.

### **Interpretation and Translation**

Your GP will inform us of any interpreting requirements you have before you come to hospital and we will provide an appropriate interpreter. If you are having this procedure as an existing in patient, staff will arrange interpreting support for you in advance of this procedure. This leaflet may be made available in a larger print, Braille or your community language.