

A nose for beauty

The nose has long been considered a symbol of beauty. And for those born with a nasal deformity, getting a 'nose job' is more than a matter of appearance but a boost to self-esteem.

By Dr Karen Sng, Plastic Surgeon



From Scarlett Johansson's daintily upturned point, Elizabeth Taylor's small 'snub' nose or Tom Cruise's aquiline Roman one, a nose is a distinctive feature that contributes not only to the aesthetics of the face, but its character. It is no wonder that many seek surgery to enhance their noses in the quest for a more pleasing appearance.

Cosmetic nasal surgery, called rhinoplasty, is frequently requested because people are conscious of the appearance of their nose. Nasal enhancement procedures which can be done include raising the bridge of the nose, making the tip less round or boxy, making the nostrils smaller, or lengthening the nose. The number of patients seeking cosmetic rhinoplasty is on the increase, due largely to the greater acceptance of cosmetic surgery in general.

In addition to the increasing popularity of rhinoplasty, the kinds of requests are also changing. While patients used to focus more on raising the nasal bridge, they are now asking for ways to refine the nasal tip or nostrils as well.

The goals of rhinoplasty

In rhinoplasty, the surgery of the nose, the angle, shape and size of a nose can be enhanced. This can be for two reasons: functional or cosmetic. In the former, the primary goal is to treat breathing problems, which could be caused by a variety of factors. Cosmetic rhinoplasty refers to nose surgery that is primarily to enhance the external appearance of the nose. Rhinoplasty can also serve both cosmetic and functional purposes, like for those who have experienced trauma from a blow to the face can that lead to a crooked nose and breathing difficulties. Congenital deformities such as cleft lip and nose can also result in functional and cosmetic problems.

A more aesthetically pleasing nose can be a great boost to anyone's self-esteem, but the patients who achieve the greatest improvement in their self-confidence after a rhinoplasty are those who have a crooked or asymmetric nose due to congenital deformity or trauma. Imagine someone who was born with a cleft lip/nose, who has been teased all their lives about having a crooked nose. For this individual, rhinoplasty can be life-changing.

Enhancements for the nose

Rhinoplasty can take several forms, from a simple procedure using just an implant to a more complex procedure that involves use of the patient's cartilage, or a combination of both methods.

In implant rhinoplasty, solid silicone nasal implants are used to augment the nasal bridge to make it higher.



A silicone nasal implant is typically shaped like an "L" or "I" and sits between the nasal framework and the skin to add definition.

In cartilage rhinoplasty, the patient's own cartilage is taken from the nose, ear, or rib. This cartilage is used to strengthen the structural framework of the nose. It helps to straighten the nose, and give projection, definition and refinement of the tip. This mode of rhinoplasty tends to have a lower risk of infection, although it requires more time and expertise.

The duration of surgery increases with the complexity of the procedure. In rhinoplasty involving a nasal implant only, the surgery takes about an hour. For rhinoplasty using the patient's own cartilage, the procedure can take about three hours or more as the cartilage needs to be harvested and shaped. Downtime ranges from one to two weeks, again depending on the complexity.

Important questions to ask

Before embarking on surgery, a patient needs to discuss various issues with their surgeon and take in advice based on the surgeon's expertise. Rather than decide what method of rhinoplasty they want based on hearsay, patients should discuss with their surgeon to understand what is more suited for them. As with any cosmetic surgery, it is important that the patient has realistic expectations of what surgery can achieve and understand that the enhanced nose needs to fit the rest of their face and their ethnicity. The following are good questions to ask:

- What can I expect from this procedure? What will my new nose look like?
- What are the risks of this procedure?
- What should I expect after surgery and what preparations should I make? What kind of aftercare can I expect?
- How long will my recovery take?



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