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Nasal Obstruction

What Is Nasal Obstruction?

Nasal obstruction is some degree of restriction of the nasal airway in which patients simply do not have a comfort level breathing through their nose. Since the problem may be long-standing, as with other difficulties to which patients simply adapt over time, it is a complaint which may not be on a conscious level. After all, the nose we have is the only one we have ever had.

What Is The Cause Of Nasal Obstruction?

Nasal obstruction can actually present as a lifelong problem. For instance, birth trauma may damage the nose, resulting in damage to the inside of the nose which may not correct itself as frequently happens with early deformity the outside of the nose. There are variations in sinus development which may also result in mechanical nasal airway obstruction. Additional causes of nasal airway obstruction are trauma, allergies, nasal polyps, sinus infections, reaction to airborne irritants and/or the chronic use of over-the-counter nasal sprays to open up the nose. The overuse (more than five days) of over-the-counter nasal sprays to open up the nose may result in a phenomenon called "rebound", known as rhinitis medicamentosa.

What Are The Effects Of Nasal Airway Obstruction?

One of the simple pleasures of life is a nose that works. The ripple effect of nasal airway obstruction may be quite significant in that both the patient and those around him may suffer the consequences. For instance, it is common knowledge, at least in this practice, that if the patient can't breathe, the odds are very high that he cannot get a refreshing night's sleep and is more likely to be a noisy sleeper. The number of patients who live their lives in chronic sleep deficit is very high and largely a result of nasal airway obstruction. Nasal airway obstruction in children is known to interfere with facial growth and development and predispose to future orthodontic treatment. Oral hygiene in both children and adults is virtually impossible in the presence of chronic mouth breathing, leading to dental and gum issues and, in some instances, foul breath.

Is There A Treatment For Nasal Obstruction?

Happily, nasal obstruction is, regardless of the causes, amenable to medical and/or surgical intervention in the vast majority of cases. Sometimes the aggressive medical management of nasal allergies will suffice. At other times clearing up an ongoing sinus infection will solve the problem. Failing to respond to conservative measures, nasal obstruction is amenable to surgical intervention with a long term success rate in the high 90% with no nasal packing required and no restrictions the day after surgery. Further, at least in our hands, no drip pad is required, and nose blowing is not only allowed, but encouraged in the immediate postoperative period. For patients with polyps, ongoing medical observation and/or treatment may be required, but those patients are in the minority.