ENT Southlake

Turbinate Hypertrophy and Nasal Obstruction

Nasal obstruction is a fairly common problem. Patients with nasal obstruction have trouble breathing through their nose, often worse while lying flat.

About Turbinate Reduction

A turbinate reduction can be done in many ways, all with the goal of gaining space to breathe. We can use radiofrequency ablation (friction energy), cautery (heat energy), or coblation technology, but the most common method is called a "submucosal resection," meaning we are removing some of the extra tissue under the surface. This is usually the longest lasting option (5-10 years). The extra tissue can grow back over time, but can be removed again if needed.

When done in the office, the nose is numbed with topical medications followed by an injection. You generally won't feel the injection much. It can sting a little, and sometimes your heart rate will increase because of epinephrine (adrenaline) in the solution.

Then a small opening will be made in the front of the turbinate and a tunnel created. This isn't painful, but there is some pressure. A small device called a sinus shaver (or microdebrider, there are several names) is then used to do the "submucosal resection" which is similar to a liposuction of the excess tissue. There are some vibrations and strange suction sounds for about 30-45 seconds. Then the inferior turbinate is repositioned, with some little crackling noises and pressure.

There is bleeding from the nose for about 24 hours and stuffiness for a few weeks. Plan to stay home the rest of the day after the procedure. Most people do not need any pain medication. There are no external changes to the nose. There is no external swelling or bruising.

What are the Turbinates?

The nasal septum and the turbinates are normal parts of the nose. The septum is the structure that divides your nasal passages into the right and left sides. A deviated septum just means that it is not straight.

The turbinates (inferior, middle and superior) are also inside the nose. There is usually space between the septum and turbinates to allow air to pass through the nose. The turbinates can cause nasal obstruction if they are too large (or "hypertrophied"). The ones that most commonly affect airflow are the inferior turbinates.

This can lead to mouthbreathing, dry mouth, less restful sleep and snoring, poor tolerance of allergies or normal viral illnesses, and dental disease.

For more information, visit our website at www.entsouthlake.com under patient handouts and Post Op Turbinate Reduction