



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Broken nose

Accident and emergency

Patient information

What is a broken nose?

A broken nose is a very common injury. It typically occurs after a fall, a sports accident, or a fight. The nose is easily damaged as it does not have much protection.

Most broken noses heal on their own within 3 weeks.

You should seek medical help if:

- The swelling is not improving
- Your nose looks bent or has changed shape.

Do I need an X-ray?

Usually, X-rays are not needed to confirm a broken nose because the bones do not show up clearly. However, if your doctor suspects other facial injuries (such as a broken cheekbone or jaw), an X-ray or scan may be done.

What are the signs of a broken nose?

Your doctor will look for the following:

- A misshapen or crooked nose
- The nose feels unstable or makes clicking sounds
- Swelling or bruising
- Nosebleeds
- Blocked nostrils
- Cuts around the nose.

Be aware

Other symptoms

Please let us know if you have any of the following symptoms.

They may suggest a more serious injury:

- You lost consciousness, vomited, or can not remember the injury

- Bleeding from the ears
- You take blood-thinning medication (like Warfarin, Apixaban, Rivaroxaban)
- Clear fluid draining from one nostril. This could be a sign of brain fluid leak.
- Bruising around your eyes
- A swollen nasal septum (between your nostrils). This may need urgent treatment
- Constant nosebleeds
- Blurred or double vision or eye pain
- Neck pain or tingling in arms or legs
- You were injured by glass or a sharp object.

How do you treat a broken nose?

A member of staff will examine your nose to make sure there is no bleeding or blood clots in your nose. We will also make sure you can breathe through both nostrils.

If you have a simple break we may:

- Advise ice packs and painkillers like paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Give you antibiotics if you have a cut or a drained blood clot
- Book a follow-up appointment with the ENT (Ear, Nose & Throat) clinic 5–7 days later (once swelling goes down).

At the ENT clinic the doctor will check if you need a minor operation to reset the nose. If surgery is needed, it is usually done 1–2 weeks after the injury.

How should I manage at home

- Most broken noses heal without surgery in around 3 weeks
- Use ice packs and take simple pain relief

- **If your nose bleeds:**

- Pinch the soft part of your nose for 20 minutes
- Sit up and lean forward, breathing through your mouth
- Apply a cold compress to your nose, forehead, and back of neck
- Spit out any blood in your mouth
- Seek help if the bleeding does not stop.

What should I avoid?

Do not

- ✗ Try to straighten your nose yourself
- ✗ Wear glasses until the swelling goes down
- ✗ Pick or blow your nose while it heals
- ✗ Do strenuous activity for 2 weeks
- ✗ Play contact sports for at least 6 weeks.

When to see medical help?

Get help if:

- You still have pain, swelling, or bleeding
- You feel feverish or unwell
- Your breathing through the nose does not improve as the swelling goes down.

Further support

For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the NHS 111 service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.

The NHS website provides online health information and guidance. There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre, Lewes Victoria Hospital, Horsham Minor Injuries Unit and Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital.

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