What is a septoplasty and turbinectomy?

A septoplasty and turbinoplasty is an operation primarily designed to improve airflow through the nasal passage. It consists of straightening the nasal septum and trimming the turbinates.

What is the nasal septum?

The septum is a cartilaginous and bony structure that divides the nasal passageway.

Why is the septum crooked?

This may be due to trauma to the nose. Other people are born with a deviated nasal septum.

What are the turbinates?

The turbinates are mucosal projections from each side of the nose. There are 3 turbinates – the inferior, middle and superior. The inferior turbinate is the turbinate implicated in nasal obstruction. It becomes swollen for various reasons. The operation aims to reduce the size of the inferior turbinate.

What are the turbinates for?

The function of the turbinates is not clear – some suggest they may help in humidification of incoming air.

How is the operation done?

The operation is done by making a small incision just inside the nose. The deviated bone and/or cartilage is carefully resected. Small dissolving sutures are used to close the incision. The turbinates are trimmed using a variety of methods. The more conservative approach using an endoscope is called a ‘turbinoplasty’ while a ‘turbinectomy’ generally implies a more substantial reduction in the size of the turbinates.

Will I have packing in my nose?

In the majority of cases nasal packing is not used.

When can I go home?

Most patients can go home the same day.

What are the risks of surgery?

All operations have some small risk associated with them. The risks include bleeding, scar bands and no improvement in the sense of nasal obstruction. Rarely, a septal perforation can occur which could lead to crusting and whistling. Rarer still is a saddle nose which is a change in the external appearance of the nose. The ‘empty nose syndrome’ is also very rare and is related to removal of excessive nasal tissue.