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COBLATION Turbinoplasty: What to Expect

What are turbinates?

Did you know that your nose is made with built-in air filters? Inside your nose are three pairs of fleshy structures that help filter, warm, and add moisture to the air you breathe. These structures are called turbinates.

Healthy turbinates will do a good job of regulating the temperature and level of moisture inside your nose. But if they become swollen, enlarged, or displaced, they can cause a nasal blockage which can make it difficult to breathe.

Why is turbinate reduction done?

Most people experience issues with their turbinates from time to time. These problems, and the breathing difficulties that accompany them, usually go away on their own or with medical treatment with nasal rinses or sprays.

Some common and reversible causes of turbinate enlargement include:

- allergies
- infections
- weather change
- stress
- medications
- hormonal changes

Turbinate reduction is commonly recommended if patients do not improve with medical treatment. Commonly, this is done in conjunction with patients undergoing a septoplasty for a deviated nasal septum.

A deviated septum is a shift of the bone and cartilage between the nose's two nostrils. It can cause compression of the turbinates and trouble breathing. A turbinate reduction can help further open up the airways in a person undergoing a septoplasty.

In select cases, the turbinate enlargement can be addressed alone, either under general anesthesia (in the operating room) or under local anesthesia in an ambulatory care setting.

COBLATION Turbinoplasty and radiofrequency reduction

In some cases, doctors recommend a minimally invasive surgery that shrink the turbinates without removing any underlying bone or tissue.

To do this, a surgeon uses a special needle-like device that heats the turbinates using a heat source or radiofrequency energy waves. This causes scar tissue to form, reducing the turbinates' size. These procedures fall under the categories of COBLATION turbinoplasty or radiofrequency reduction.

They usually take about 15-30 minutes and can be performed under general anesthesia or local anesthesia in an ambulatory outpatient setting depending upon the individual situation.

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What's recovery like?

Recovery times vary for each type of turbinate reduction procedure. For less invasive turbinate reductions such as COBLATION turbinoplasty, recovery is usually quick and not very painful. In about three weeks, the new scar tissue in your nose should be completely healed.

To reduce possible complications, it is important to follow the post-operative instructions which will be provided to you after surgery. This will include the use of oral antibiotic, nasal saline irrigation and lubricating ointments/sprays during the recovery period.

Are there side effects?

Side effects are less likely and less severe for less invasive COBLATION turbinate reduction procedures. For about three weeks, you may experience crusting or nose dryness. Possible rare side effects using COBLATION include:

- pain
- bleeding
- swelling
- dryness
- crusting
- infection

There's also a possibility that turbinate tissue may regrow after surgery, making it necessary to undergo further turbinate reduction.

What's the outlook?

The goal of COBLATION turbinoplasty is to reduce the swelling of the turbinates while still maintaining their function. In this scenario, COBLATION offers the most advanced minimally invasive treatment modality currently available for turbinate enlargement.

In most cases, turbinate reductions are successful at opening the airways and making breathing easier. By following your surgeon's pre-operative and after-care instructions, you can speed your healing and maximize your results.

For more information, please see following links below:

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceJoqG3RIos
2. https://www.brodnermd.com/cutting-edge-techniques-and-equipment/coblation/
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFLM2RNZXtc&t=70s * (for children undergoing coblation turbinoplasty)