

Cautery of Turbinates

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What are the Turbinates?

Turbinates are structures that project into the length of the nasal cavities from front to back. They are lined by mucosa and they are there to humidify air as we breathe through the nose and trap any particles in the sticky mucous that covers them.

What are the problems that can be related to enlarged Turbinates?

Air that enters the nose can contain various substances such as allergens that then irritate the lining of the nasal cavities, including the Turbinates. This results in inflammation, swelling, and nasal obstruction. The operation of Cautery of Turbinates is carried out to treat nasal obstruction caused by enlarged Turbinates. Usually children will have failed a trial of treatment with a nasal steroid spray.

How are the Turbinates cauterised?

This operation is carried out under general anaesthesia as a day case (unless other operations are also being carried out that require an overnight stay). The surgery takes 5-10 minutes and the child stays in hospital for a few hours afterwards.

Local anaesthetic/decongestant solution is sprayed into the nose. A fine probe is passed into the Turbinates. Heat is passed through the tip of the probe into the Turbinate which causes it to shrink. This is repeated on the other side. Care is taken to ensure that there is no bleeding.

After the Operation

Most children are back to normal activity levels within 24 hours of surgery, although some children take a few days to recover and it is perhaps best to keep children home from child care, kindergarten, or school for 2-3 days. If possible, it is best that they stay away from anyone with a cold or infection.

After the operation the turbinates will swell for a week or two before they scar up to a smaller size. It is often useful to use antibiotic ointment to the nose for a few days afterward, and also beneficial to use saline spray to clear any crusting from the nose.

Your child should not blow their nose for a few days after the surgery but may sniff. Some blood stained nasal discharge is acceptable. There should not be any bleeding from the mouth or nose after surgery. If bleeding occurs, take your child to the nearest Emergency Department or call an ambulance.

Most children have little if any pain. Paracetamol for a few days is all that is required. Avoid using aspirin or Nurofen after the operation.

Follow Up

A follow up appointment is usually booked for 4 weeks after surgery.