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Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS)

What is FESS?

FESS (Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery) is a minimally invasive procedure for the treatment of chronic sinusitis. It is designed to remove blockage and provide free drainage of the sinus. FESS causes little tissue damage and there is no visible scarring that is associated with open surgery.

When Is It Recommended?

Your doctor will recommend FESS in the event that you have chronic sinusitis and do not respond well to medication or other forms of treatment. This occurs when the sinuses (any one of the four pairs of cavities in your skull which produces mucous) are blocked and unable to drain the mucous. When this happens, the sinuses can become infected and this is very painful.

How Does It Work?

This procedure uses an endoscope, which is a thin "telescope" that allows your doctor an inside view of your sinuses. This enables the surgeon to identify and correct anatomic causes of sinus outflow obstruction. Other surgical instruments may be inserted alongside the endoscope to treat problems inside your sinuses.

The kind of surgery will depend on the extent of the sinus problem. Sometimes other nasal procedures may be performed with the sinus surgery to improve access and drainage of the sinuses.

What Should I Do Before The Procedure?

Your doctor will give you specific instructions regarding food and liquid intake before your surgery.

If you are on aspirin or other blood-thinning medications, stop taking them at least one week before the operation or as advised by your doctor.

You may also be advised to quit or cut down on smoking one week before surgery.

If you develop a cold, cough, fever or sore throat a week before your admission, please call the hospital at Tel: (512)328-7722 during office hours. It may be necessary to postpone the operation.

You will be admitted a day before the scheduled surgery. The anesthetist will review your condition and discuss the type of anesthesia you will receive.

A final general check will be carried out to assess your fitness for the surgery.

You should not consume any food and water after midnight.

Undergoing the Procedure

On the morning of the surgery, you will be asked to empty your bladder and remove all jewelry.

Once you have changed into a hospital gown, a nurse will accompany you to the operating theatre. She will verify your personal particulars and medical status.

Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery is performed under general anesthesia. If there is moderate bleeding at the end of the procedure or another procedure has also been carried out, a nasal pack

will be inserted into the nose. Silk stitches will be sewn to the ends of the nasal pack to prevent it from slipping and provide for easy removal.

How Long Does It Take?

The procedure can last from one to three hours depending on the extent of blockage.

Are There Side Effects?

Major complications are rare.

Persistent bleeding from the nose can occur within a week after surgery.

What Can I Do After Undergoing FESS?

You will be moved to the recovery area where nurses will monitor you for one to two hours. A nasal dressing may be used to absorb any bloodstained fluid, which should be minimal.

The doctor will review you before you are brought back to your ward.

Once the anesthesia wears off, you will be allowed to eat and drink.

Some level of discomfort is to be expected after surgery. Pain relief medication may be given. If nasal packs are used, they are usually removed the morning after surgery.

You should try your best not to blow your nose immediately after the surgery as this may cause bleeding.

Pain following nasal surgery is usually mild and readily controlled by medication. Antibiotics and painkillers will be prescribed.

You can expect some bloodstained mucous from your nose for up to one week after surgery. This will be heaviest during the first 3 days and you may have to keep a gauze bandage taped beneath your nose. After three days, you may blow your nose gently if necessary.

There is no special restriction on food and drink. Increase your fluid intake by drinking several glasses of water daily. Avoid dehydrating substances such as alcohol, coffee and irritants such as cigarettes. Sleep with your head elevated by using at least two pillows. This will help to reduce the pain and swelling.

You should avoid heavy lifting, straining and exercise that might cause nasal bleeding during the first week. After the first week, you may resume normal activities. It is quite normal to feel tired more easily after surgery. Slow down if you need to.

Do not be alarmed if you cannot breathe through your nose at first, it usually takes 2 to 3 weeks before the inflammation and swelling inside the nose reduces to provide a clear nasal passage.

Call your doctor or come to the emergency department if you develop sudden new bleeding from the nose which does not stop after a few minutes of sitting up and firmly squeezing your nostrils together, or if you have a fever more than 38 degrees Celsius.

One week after surgery, doctors would aspirate (using suction) the wound secretions and remove the encrusted tissue linings with an instrument under direct endoscopic vision. No new trauma should occur during this period

Follow-up appointments vary depending on the findings and the underlying disease. It may take 6 weeks to 6 months for your sinus to recover after surgery. Just as the success rate of the surgery depends on the severity and type of sinusitis, the possibility of recurrence of sinusitis varies with the individual and the causes of the sinus problem. In some cases, a second operation may be necessary to clear residual tissues