

Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery or FESS

Background

The operation is usually performed due to prolonged infections. There may also be polyps blocking the nose that need to be removed.

The procedure

The procedure is generally performed under local anaesthesia. Using an endoscope, the tight sinus cavities are dilated under visual control, removing diseased mucosa as necessary. The procedure takes about one hour. Prior to the procedure, the nose is anaesthetised with wipes or cotton swabs soaked in anaesthetic solution. At the end of the procedure, tampons are often inserted in the nose to prevent bleeding and formation of scar tissue.

Tampons

In most cases, absorbable tampons are inserted in the nose after the procedure. They will usually dissolve in 1–2 weeks and do not have to be removed. If removable tampons have been inserted in your nose, moisten the tampons carefully with the saline solution you were given from the hospital before removing them. After moistening, remove the tampons by pulling the strings. There may be some bleeding from the nose after removing the tampons. You may reduce the bleeding by applying a cold pack to your neck. The bleeding usually stops within 30 minutes.

Recovery

There may be slight bleeding for 1–2 days. Your nose will feel stuffy due to mucosal swelling and encrustation. Mild stuffiness may persist for several weeks. Starting on the day following the procedure, it is important to moisten the nose several times a day with moisturising sprays or drops (e.g. A-vita® nasal drops, Humidose®) available from the pharmacy without prescription. You will be given separate instructions on how to flush your nose. If you have previously used a nasal spray with cortisone, your doctor will advise you on whether to continue using it. Due to risk of bleeding, avoid blowing your nose hard, sneezing, physical exertion and sauna baths while you are on sick leave. The night following the procedure, you should sleep in a half-sitting position.

Eating

You will be given something cold and liquid to eat 1–2 hours after surgery, but hot drinks and hot food should be avoided for 1–2 days to prevent bleeding.

Pain management

At first, the nasal area may feel sore, and the nasal tampons and mucosal swelling often cause a headache and a feeling of pressure in the nose. You should take painkillers regularly for a few days.

Follow-up appointment

You will have a follow-up appointment at the ENT Outpatient Clinic after 3–4 weeks. At the appointment, your nose is examined endoscopically under local anaesthesia and the operated area is cleaned. Take a painkiller when you come in for your follow-up appointment.

Sick leave

The length of sick leave is usually 1–2 weeks, depending on the procedure and the type of work you do.

Contact the hospital if you have

- a fever above 38°C or other signs of infection
- a severe pain that is not alleviated with painkillers
- heavy bleeding

Contact information

Ear, Nose and Throat Outpatient Clinic
Monday to Friday, 8 am – 3 pm
Tel. 050 473 5086

Day Surgery Unit
Monday to Friday, 8 am – 3 pm
Tel. 02 627 3840

Short Stay Unit
Tel. 02 627 7512