Powered microdebrider turbinoplasty for inferior turbinate hypertrophy

Information for the public
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What has NICE said?

This procedure is safe enough and works well enough for use in the NHS.

What does this mean for me?

Your health professional should fully explain what is involved in having this procedure and discuss the possible benefits and risks with you. You should also be told how to find more information about the procedure. All of this should happen before you decide whether you want to have this procedure or not.

The condition

The turbinates are ridges of bone behind the nose, covered by a tissue membrane. When the membrane is inflamed and swollen, the turbinates become bigger and can block the

nasal passages. This is called turbinate hypertrophy.

Some people with inferior turbinate hypertrophy have long-term symptoms ranging from mild congestion to a completely blocked nose. They may have a runny nose. Their sleep can be affected and they may get headaches or have facial pain or discomfort.

Decongestants, nasal sprays or steroid injections can be used to treat the problem. If these don't work surgery may be an option.

NICE has looked at using powered microdebrider turbinoplasty as another treatment option.

The procedure

The aim of powered microdebrider turbinoplasty is to reduce the size of the inferior turbinates. It is usually done using a local anaesthetic. A cutting tool called a microdebrider is inserted through the nostril and moved into the turbinate. It is then used to cut and suck away some of the swollen membrane covering the turbinates.

Benefits and risks

When NICE looked at the evidence, it decided that the procedure is safe enough and works well enough for use in the NHS. The 8 studies that NICE looked at involved a total of 887 patients.

Generally, they showed the following benefits:

- improvements in symptoms such as a blocked nose, sneezing, runny nose and snoring
- improvements in the nasal airway
- increased space in the nose.

The studies showed that the risks of powered microdebrider turbinoplasty included the following after the procedure:

- bleeding in about a third of patients

- a runny nose in about 10% of patients
- a crust forming in the nose in about 12% of patients
- a dry nose in about 3% of patients.

NICE was also told that some patients also experience 'empty nose syndrome', which includes dryness, crusting and a sense that the nose is blocked because of a loss of sensation.

If you want to know more about the studies see the guidance. Ask your health professional to explain anything you don't understand.

Questions to ask your health professional

- What does the procedure involve?
- What are the benefits I might get?
- How good are my chances of getting those benefits? Could having the procedure make me feel worse?
- Are there alternative procedures?
- What are the risks of the procedure?
- Are the risks minor or serious? How likely are they to happen?
- What care will I need after the procedure?
- What happens if something goes wrong?
- What may happen if I don't have the procedure?

About this information

NICE interventional procedures guidance advises the NHS on the safety of a procedure and how well it works.

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