

# Nasal Polyps

## What are nasal polyps?

Nasal polyps are growths in the lining of the nose or sinuses. Polyps usually occur in both the right and left nasal passages. If you have just 1 polyp, it's important to make sure it's not cancerous.

## What is the cause?

The reason some people get nasal polyps is not known. They commonly occur with diseases such as asthma, aspirin allergy, allergic rhinitis (hay fever), chronic sinus infections, and cystic fibrosis (an inherited lung disease). Men are more likely than women to have nasal polyps.

## What are the symptoms?

Polyps look like small white or pink grapes high inside the back of the nose. They can cause:

- Stuffy nose and trouble breathing
- Runny nose or sneezing
- A poor sense of smell and taste
- Changes in the way your voice sounds
- Mouth breathing
- Frequent sinus infections

## How are they diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your medical history and examine you. He or she will ask if you have asthma or are allergic to aspirin. You may be referred to an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist) for an endoscopy. Endoscopy uses a small, flexible, lighted scope to examine your nasal passages. (Before the test you are given numbing medicine so that the test will not be painful.)

## How are they treated?

If your nasal polyps are small, your healthcare provider may prescribe a steroid nasal spray. This medicine will usually slowly shrink the polyps. If you keep taking the medicine, it may prevent new polyps.

Using a steroid for a long time can have serious side effects. Take steroid medicine exactly as your healthcare provider prescribes. Don't take more or less of it than prescribed by your provider and don't take it longer than prescribed. Don't stop taking a steroid without your provider's approval. You may have to lower your dosage slowly before stopping it.

If your polyps are large, you may need surgery to remove them.

## **How long do the effects last?**

Steroid medicines usually begin to shrink nasal polyps within 10 days.

If the polyps are causing serious symptoms or if the steroid medicine is not shrinking the polyps, you may have surgery to remove the polyps. You may have some soreness from the procedure, but it should not last more than a few days.

Once you have had nasal polyps, they often come back. You may need to take medicine that helps prevent them or you may need to have polyps removed surgically again.

## **How can I help prevent nasal polyps?**

Because the cause of nasal polyps is not known, there is no known way to prevent them. If you have had nasal polyps, using a steroid nasal spray on a regular basis may keep polyps from coming back. Talk with your healthcare provider about this.

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