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The Blocked Nose

Remit

A brief review of the causes of a blocked nose is presented. Details of the diseases discussed can be found elsewhere.

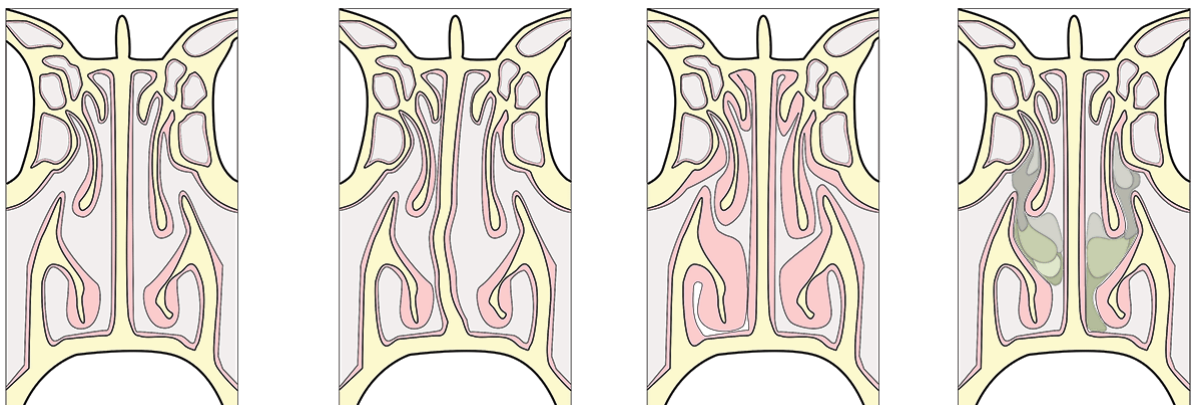
Think logically

The simplest way to remember the basics of the blocked nose is to recall the tissues within the nasal cavity that may cause obstruction. In fact, there are only two tissue of importance: the nasal mucosa and the nasal skeleton (cartilage and bone). Remember also the adenoids. Strictly these are not in the nose but in the nasopharynx however, they are included here as a cause of nasal blockage.

Any disease that causes swelling in the nasal mucosa will cause a blockage.

There are 4 main causes of nasal obstruction;

1. **Rhinitis** of any type, viral, allergic or other. This is by far the commonest cause.
2. **Nasal polyps**. Read the section on polyps for further information. Tumours are also a cause but are very uncommon.
3. The **adenoids** are a collection of lymphoid tissue that arises in the roof of the nasopharynx. It is large in childhood and is a common cause of obstruction in children. It is much less common in adults.
4. **Deviations of the nasal septum** also cause nasal obstruction and this may be unilateral or bilateral. They are frequently idiopathic in origin but facial trauma also causes them. The turbinates may be large or deformed and contribute to obstruction.



The diagram shows, from left to right, a straight septum, a deviated septum (to the right), rhinitis, and nasal polyps.