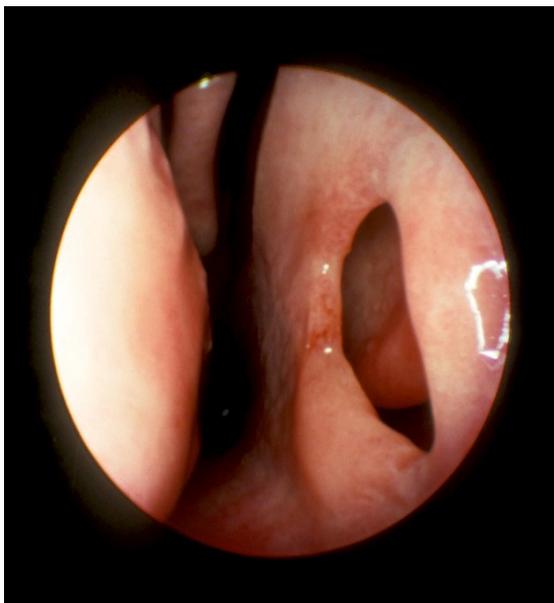




Septal Perforations

Introduction

A septal perforation is a hole through the nasal septum. Generally, it is sited through the cartilaginous septum and can be of a variety of sizes.



The clinical image shows a hole through the cartilaginous septum as seen through the right nostril. You can see the left nasal cavity and inferior turbinate through it.

Symptoms

Perforations of the septum may cause very little in the way of symptoms but most will cause some symptoms. These include:

- Bleeding from the edge of the perforation
- Crusting in the nose
- Obstruction of the nose due to build up of crusts
- Whistling of air through the perforation

Causes

There is a long list of diseases that may cause a perforation and these are shown below. By far the commonest cause is nasal trauma. This may be by a direct blow to the face, from long term nasal picking, or aggressive cautery for epistaxis. Systemic diseases such as Granulomatosis with polyangiitis and infections like syphilis must be excluded as must malignancy.

Investigation

If there is no obvious cause for the perforation investigations are initiated. These include cANCA, Serum ACE and syphilis serology. Biopsy may follow if these are normal or there is a high suspicion of malignancy.

Treatment

Simple conservative treatments such as nasal douching with saline solutions and antiseptic creams are the mainstay of treatment. They won't cure the perforation but they will reduce

bleeding, crusting and nasal obstruction. If a systemic disease is found this must be treated alongside nasal medications.

Surgery to close the perforation may be undertaken but is challenging and, the bigger the hole is, the less likely is it to succeed.

Other causes of septal perforation

1. Battery buttons left in the nose
2. Leprosy
3. Histoplasmosis and HIV
4. Leishmaniasis
5. SLE associated with vasculitis
6. Dermatomyositis
7. Rhinoscleroma
8. Takayasu's disease
9. Juvenile idiopathic arthritis
10. Pyoderma gangrenosum
11. Chromium exposure
12. Crohn's and Ulcerative colitis

Despite this long list of possibilities, the patient who suffers with one will have other signs and symptoms of their disease as well as a septal perforation. It is very unusual for the perforation to be the first sign of a systemic disease.