



Disclaimer: This leaflet provides general information and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. It is essential to consult with a qualified healthcare professional for any health concerns or before making any decisions related to your health or treatment.

What is FESS?

FESS stands for Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery. It's a minimally invasive procedure used to treat persistent sinus problems. We use a small, lighted telescope called an endoscope to see inside your nose and sinuses. This allows us to access and treat the affected areas without making any external cuts. We can remove blockages, address inflammation, and improve sinus drainage. FESS can be used to treat chronic sinusitis, both with and without nasal polyps.

Why Might I Need FESS?

You might need FESS if you have chronic sinusitis that hasn't responded to other treatments like nasal sprays, drops, or antibiotics. Symptoms that might suggest you need FESS include:

- A blocked nose that doesn't clear up
- Persistent thick nasal discharge (runny nose)
- Reduced sense of smell or taste
- Pain or pressure in your face
- Headaches
- Recurring sinus infections

What Happens Before Surgery?

Before your surgery, you'll attend a pre-assessment clinic. This includes routine checks like blood tests, a heart trace (ECG), and screening for MRSA. We will discuss your medical history and confirm you are fit for surgery. You'll also receive instructions about fasting. Usually, this means no food for six hours and only clear fluids (water, black tea, black coffee) for two hours before your scheduled arrival time. Please inform us about any allergies, medical conditions, or religious requirements you may have.

What Happens During Surgery?

FESS is usually performed under general anaesthetic, so you'll be asleep. In some cases, we might only numb your nose. During the procedure, we insert the endoscope into your nostrils to view the sinuses. We use specialised instruments to remove blockages such as bone spurs, inflamed tissue, and nasal polyps (if present). The aim is to open up the sinus passages and improve drainage. The procedure usually takes between 30 and 60 minutes.

What Happens After Surgery?

After the operation, you'll be monitored in a recovery area. If you had a general anaesthetic, you'll need someone to accompany you home and stay with you for the first 24 hours. You might have nasal packing in place, which can be either dissolvable or removable after a few hours.

We'll provide you with nasal drops or sprays (often steroids) and possibly tablets to help reduce inflammation and prevent symptoms from returning. You may need pain relief for a few days – simple painkillers like paracetamol or ibuprofen are usually sufficient. We'll schedule a follow-up appointment around 4-8 weeks after your surgery to check on your progress.

What are the Potential Risks and Complications?

FESS is generally safe, but like any surgery, it carries some risks. These can include:

- **Nosebleeds:** These are common but usually minor. More significant bleeding can occur but is less frequent.
- **Infection:** Rare but can be serious. Let us know if your nose gets increasingly blocked or painful.
- **Eye complications:** Very rarely, bleeding can occur near the eye, causing bruising or, in extremely rare cases, double vision or sight problems.
- **CSF leak (cerebrospinal fluid leak):** This is an extremely rare but serious complication involving leakage of the fluid surrounding the brain. Further surgery may be needed.
- **Meningitis:** Extremely rare and related to CSF leakage.
- **General anaesthetic risks:** These are rare and similar to any surgery requiring a general anaesthetic and include blood clots and other serious events.

Long-Term Outlook

FESS can significantly improve symptoms of chronic sinusitis for the long term, however, it's important to remember that chronic sinusitis is a long-term condition. Even after surgery, you'll likely need to continue using nasal sprays or rinses and medication to keep symptoms under control and reduce the chance of the polyps returning.

Recovery and Returning to Normal Activities

After FESS, you'll need to take it easy for a couple of weeks.

- **For the first two weeks:**
 - Breathe gently through your nose. Avoid blowing or sniffing.
 - Sneeze with your mouth open.
 - Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activity.
 - Expect some blood-tinged watery discharge from your nose. This is normal.
 - Your nose will feel blocked, similar to a bad cold.
- **Work:** We recommend taking at least one week off work.
- **Exercise:** Avoid strenuous exercise for two weeks.
- **Flying:** Avoid flying for two weeks.

Living with Chronic Sinusitis (With or Without Nasal Polyps)

Chronic sinusitis requires ongoing management, even after successful surgery. Long-term medication, including nasal sprays, drops or rinses are often needed. Regular use of these medications, especially steroid nasal sprays, is essential to control inflammation and reduce the likelihood of symptoms returning. It's also important to avoid smoking, as it irritates the nasal lining and slows healing. We will be with you at each step to guide you.