

# Sinus

The sinuses are a group of air cells in the skull. They help lighten the head and provide “crumple zones” to protect important structures such as eyes and nerves. The sinuses have very specific drainage patterns which can get blocked. Sinus surgery is to address these blockages. It is not a magic cure all; about 5-10 percent of the time a second surgery is needed, and about 5-10 percent of the time it will not do any good at all. But when a CT scan shows a blockage of one of the drainage tracts it can do a lot of good. In sinus surgery I am nothing but a plumber, all I can do is open the pipes, there is very little that I can do with something that is wrong with the sinuses themselves.

**What are the sinuses needed for:** There is quite a bit of controversy over this. Some of the things we know they do is help lighten the head, provide “crumple zones” to protect important structures, help with voice resonance, increase the warmth and humidity of air going into the lungs, and change the way we smell.

**Why do you do sinus surgery:** For blockages of sinus passageways. I am just a plumber, and can only open the pipes. Sometimes tumors or fungus can grow in the sinus. These can be removed through the nose as well.

**How do you do sinus surgery:** It is all done through the nose with Fiber optic cameras we put in the nose. I open the maxillary and sphenoid sinus just enough to get good flow. I remove the ethmoid sinus all the way to the skull base, and I use a balloon for the frontal sinuses, and I use a shaver for polyps. These are all rules of thumb and will all change depending on what I find on the CT scan and in surgery. I try and leave the middle turbinate, and only address the septum and turbinates if they need addressing. I do not use packing unless there is a lot of bleeding. I use foam packing which dissolves itself in 1-2 weeks.

**What are the risks of sinus surgery:** We are operating between the eyes and just under the brain. The bone separating is called the “paper thin” bone in Latin. When you get into the sphenoid sinus you are surrounded by the carotid artery optic nerve, and brain. There is always risk to any of these areas when doing sinus surgery.

**Important post-op instructions:** You cannot blow your nose for the first week. Use of nasal saline at least 4 times a day will help things heal. You will need to be seen in the office every week for about 3-4 weeks to make sure everything is healing OK. Resumed use of nasal sprays after the first week is important for overall nasal health. Neti pots should not be used for the first week or two, but after that are great, and can be used for the rest of your life

**Long term ramifications:** There should be very little, other than better sinus health.

**How long does surgery last:** 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours for most surgeries, but like anything in surgery this can vary greatly. I once did it on a very sick elderly lady in just over 10 minutes.

