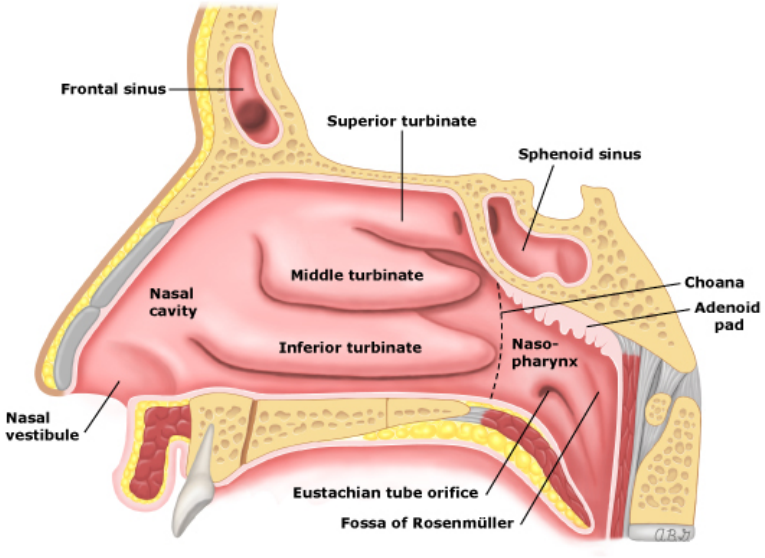
ROCKY MOUNTAIN PEDIATRIC ENT ASSOCIATES

INFERIOR TURBINATES HANDOUT

What are turbinates and what do they do? Turbinates are structures in the nose that are made of mucosa and spongy bone, covered with mucous membranes. The turbinates warm, humidify, and filter inspired air before its passage to the lungs. These structures swell or contract with changes in temperature, humidity, allergen exposure, and emotional changes. There is also a regular, cyclical pattern of turbinate swelling, which alternates between sides at intervals of two to five hours. This is sometimes referred to as the nasal cycle.



What are the indications for surgery? If the turbinates become enlarged, it can cause nasal obstruction and difficulty breathing. Patients often complain of congestion, stuffiness, fullness, or blockage within the nose. Usually, first line treatment is medical with the use of a nasal steroid spray. The turbinates can be surgically reduced in size.

The majority of cases of nasal obstruction are effectively treated with a combination of medications and surgical therapy. However, nasal symptoms may wax and wane and it is not uncommon for nasal obstruction to recur if allergic stimuli are encountered again or if structural abnormalities recur after treatment. Such failure may occur months or even years after initial therapy, but generally responds well to another course of treatment.

After surgery: We recommend using a saline nasal spray (for example: Ayr or Ocean) four times a day for 2 weeks after surgery. Additionally, applying a water-based gel, such as Ayr or K-Y Jelly, to the nasal openings at night, will prevent crusting of mucus on the fresh surgery site. Have Afrin on hand after surgery for bleeding. It can take several weeks to heal and for stuffiness to subside.