Cigna Medical Coverage Policy

Subject: Rhinoplasty, Vestibular Stenosis Repair and Septoplasty

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Coverage Policy

Coverage for rhinoplasty is dependent on benefit plan language, may be subject to the provisions of a cosmetic and/or reconstructive surgery benefit and may be governed by state and/or federal mandates. Under many benefit plans, rhinoplasty is not covered when performed solely for the purpose of altering appearance or self-esteem or to treat psychological symptomatology or psychosocial complaints related to one’s appearance. In addition, rhinoplasty is specifically excluded under some benefit plans.

Please refer to the applicable benefit plan language to determine the terms and conditions of coverage.

Rhinoplasty & Vestibular Stenosis Repair

Cigna covers rhinoplasty as medically necessary for ANY of the following indications:

- Correction or repair of a nasal deformity secondary to a cleft/lip palate or other severe congenital craniofacial deformity (e.g., cleft lip/palate, Binder’s syndrome, facial clefts) in a child five years of age or younger.
- Correction or repair of a nasal deformity secondary to a cleft lip/palate or other severe congenital craniofacial deformity (e.g., maxillonasal dysplasia, Binder’s syndrome, facial clefts) in a child that is age six years of age or older that is causing a functional impairment (i.e., nasal obstruction, inadequate airflow, feeding difficulties) when BOTH of the following criteria are met:

  - photographic evidence of the anatomical abnormality including frontal, lateral and worm’s eye view (e.g., nasal base)
  - the functional impairment is expected to be resolved by the rhinoplasty
• Correction or repair of a nasal deformity secondary to trauma that is causing a functional impairment (i.e., nasal obstruction, inadequate airflow) and ALL of the following criteria are met:
  ➢ nasal airway obstruction is poorly responsive to a recent six week trial of conservative medical management (e.g., topical/nasal corticosteroids, antihistamines)
  ➢ photographic evidence of the anatomical abnormality including frontal, lateral and worm’s eye view (e.g., nasal base)
  ➢ the functional impairment has either not resolved after previous septoplasty/turbinectomy or would not be expected to resolve with a septoplasty/turbinectomy alone
  ➢ the functional impairment is expected to be resolved by the rhinoplasty

Cigna covers vestibular stenosis repair as medically necessary when there is chronic nasal obstruction due to vestibular stenosis (i.e., collapsed internal valves) when ALL of the following criteria are met:

• demonstration of improvement of the airway by EITHER of the following methods:
  ➢ positive Cottle maneuver
  ➢ lateralization of the upper lateral cartilage from inside the nose with an object (e.g., cotton swab or nasal speculum)
• the nasal airway obstruction is poorly responsive to a recent six week trial of conservative medical management (e.g., mechanical treatments such as nasal strips, stents, or cones)
• the condition has either not resolved after previous septoplasty/turbinectomy or would not be expected to resolve with septoplasty/turbinectomy alone

Cigna does not cover rhinoplasty or vestibular stenosis repair when performed for EITHER of the following indications because it is considered cosmetic in nature or not medically necessary:

• solely for the purpose of changing appearance
• as a primary treatment for an obstructive sleep disorder when the above criteria for approval have not been met

Septoplasty

Cigna covers septoplasty as medically necessary when performed for ANY of the following indications:

• septal deviation causing nasal airway obstruction resulting in prolonged or chronic nasal breathing difficulty or mouth breathing that has proved poorly responsive to a recent trial of conservative medical management (e.g., topical/nasal corticosteroids, antihistamines) lasting at least six weeks
• rhinosinusitis secondary to a deviated septum that does not resolve after appropriate medical and antibiotic therapy and EITHER of the following indications are present:
  ➢ recurrent acute rhinosinusitis: four or more acute episodes per year
  ➢ chronic rhinosinusitis: duration more than 12 weeks
• recurrent epistaxis related to a septal deformity
• performed in association with a covered cleft lip or cleft palate repair
• obstructed nasal breathing due to septal deformity or deviation that has proved poorly responsive to medical management lasting at least six weeks and is interfering with the effective use of medically necessary continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) for the treatment of an obstructive sleep disorder (i.e., obstructive sleep apnea with an apnea/hypopnea index (AHI) ≥ 15 as documented by polysomnography or home/portable sleep study)

General Background

The anatomy of the nose is made up of two main structural layers: the outer layer which contains the nasal soft tissues, lower lateral (alar) cartilages (lateral, middle and medial crura), and the associated linings; and the inner layer which contains the bony and upper cartilaginous vaults, the nasal septum, and their associated linings. The nasal region contains several nasal muscles, two of which are clinically significant: the levator labii alaeque nasi, which keeps the nasal valve open; and the depressor septi nasi, which shortens the upper lip and decreases tip projection. The external anatomy of the nose consists of several anatomic landmarks that includes
the radix, dorsum, supratip, tip, columella, nostrils, and alar rims (American Society of Plastic Surgeons [ASPS], 2006).

**Rhinoplasty**

Rhinoplasty is a surgical procedure to correct a nasal deformity or to change the appearance of the nose. Although it is typically performed for cosmetic purposes to correct or improve the external appearance of the nose, there may be situations when it is considered reconstructive in nature. Rhinoplasty may be an open or closed procedure. Nasal deformities may be congenital, (e.g., cleft lip/palate) or acquired (e.g., trauma, disease, ablative surgery). Nasal traumas may result in significant functional defects and nasal obstruction. The current management for the majority of nasal injuries is closed reduction of nasal fractures. A second operation may be needed to treat the nasal deformity secondary to trauma that is causing a functional impairment (e.g., nasal obstruction, inadequate airflow). Conservative medical management should be attempted before surgical treatment is considered. Treatment may include antihistamine and decongestant use as well as topical steroid management. After trauma, there may be limited, specific situations where the nasal obstruction cannot be expected to be corrected by a septoplasty procedure alone (Kridel, et al., 2010).

**Vestibular Stenosis Repair**

Vestibular stenosis or collapse of the internal valves may be a cause of nasal obstruction. The nasal valve refers to tissue that acts as a bridge between the bony skeleton and the nasal tip and can account for approximately half of the total airway resistance of the entire upper and lower respiratory tract. Nasal valve compromise may account for nasal airway obstruction. The causes of internal nasal valve obstruction may include: previous surgery, trauma, facial paralysis, and cleft lip nasal deformities (Schlosser and Park, 1999). The nasal valve has internal and external components. The internal nasal valve is the narrowest portion of the nasal cavity and compromise of these components of the valve may create symptoms of nasal obstruction. Deformities of the adjacent nasal septum or loss of anatomic support structures can predispose the valve to collapse or narrowing, which may cause airway obstruction. The upper lateral cartilage at its junction with the septum may be thickened, twisted, or concave as a result of weakness, trauma or prior surgery.

The external valve is a laterally based space that is surrounded by the anterior nasal opening in the skull, the upper lateral cartilage and lower lateral cartilage attachments and the caudal septum (Kridel, et al., 2010).

A consensus panel was convened by the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) to create a clinical consensus statement for the diagnosis and management of nasal valve compromise (NVC) (Rhee, et al., 2010). The statement included:

- NVC is a distinct clinical entity for patients who present with symptomatic nasal airway obstruction and is best evaluated with history and physical examination findings.
- Audible improvement in nasal airflow during a Cottle maneuver (manual lateral retraction of the cheek) or manual intranasal lateralization of the lateral nasal wall is consistent with NVC
- Endoscopy and photographs may be useful, but are not routinely indicated
- Radiographic studies are not useful in evaluating NVC
- Nasal steroid medication is not useful for treatment of NVC in absence of rhinitis
- Mechanical treatments (e.g., nasal strips, stents, or cones) may be useful in selected patients
- Surgical treatment is the primary mode of treatment of NVC. The panel met consensus that surgical procedure that is targeted to support the lateral nasal wall/alar rim is a distinct entity from procedures that correct a deviated nasal septum or hypertrophied turbinate.

The Cottle maneuver is a test of nasal valve integrity. It can be performed by retracting the cheek laterally, pulling the upper lateral cartilage away from the septum and widening the internal nasal valve angle. If the patient’s symptoms are relieved with this maneuver, it suggests that the cause of the nasal airway obstruction is related to the nasal valve area (e.g., dorsal septal deviation, lack of upper lateral cartilage integrity) (Chandra, et al., 2009). Another technique to evaluate the nasal valves involves using an object (e.g., cotton swab or nasal speculum) to lateralize the upper lateral cartilage from inside the nose, and the patient is asked if their symptoms are improved. This technique allows direct observation of the nasal valve area as it widens (Chandra, et al., 2009).

**Septoplasty**
Septoplasty is the surgical correction of a deformity of the nasal septum, which is the partition that divides the nasal cavity into two chambers. The presence of a septal deformity can be caused by trauma, or it may be congenital. The initial method of assessing nasal breathing function is by taking the patient's history. This should include asking patient specifically about the symptoms of nasal obstruction. The side of obstruction, its severity, frequency, and duration, and exacerbating factors are recorded (Corey, et al., 2010; O'Handley, et al., 2010). Physical examination many demonstrate the septum obstructing the nasal airway if anterior, if more posterior, nasal endoscopy or computed tomography (CT) scan may be necessary. The examination may include an assessment by the physician of the appearance of the intranasal anatomy, the cross-sectional area, and the condition of the lining tissues of the nose. The assessment may utilize the aid of a speculum and headlight or head mirror. In addition, endoscopy may be performed, typically with a small flexible scope but sometimes with a rigid scope (Corey, et al., 2010; O'Handley, et al., 2010).

Nasal obstruction is a feeling of blockage or insufficient air flow through the nose. In cases of nasal obstruction, once the diagnosis has been established, the treatment plan is based on the diagnosis. If the nasal obstruction is secondary to one of the various types of rhinitis, it is treated medically. This may include nasal steroids, antihistamines, leukotriene inhibitors, mucolytics, oral decongestants, topical decongestants, and nasal saline. These medications may be used individually, or in various combinations. The choice of medications is determined by the severity of symptoms, patient's medical history, and response to treatment. Oral steroids may be used in select severe cases but are associated with potential significant side effects. Nasal decongestant sprays are utilized for treating severe nasal congestion but should be used sparingly and never for longer than 3 days, to prevent rebound nasal obstruction. Antibiotics are administered in the case of bacterial infection or acute rhinosinusitis (Corey, et al., 2010; O’Handley, et al., 2010). In cases with septal deviation that is severe enough to cause symptoms of obstruction that are consistent with intranasal physical findings septoplasty may be necessary.

The nasal turbinates, also known as concha, are thin, curved bony plates located in the nasal cavity. Hypertrophy of the turbinates can cause nasal obstruction and may lead to sinusitis (Mickelson and Benninger, 2001). Septoplasty is a surgical procedure that corrects nasal septum defects or deformities by alteration, splinting, or removal of obstructing supporting structures. Resection of the turbinates may also be performed with the septoplasty.

Septoplasty and rhinoplasty procedures may involve the use of grafts, in particular grafts obtained from the septum (Flint, et al., 2010). Harvested septal cartilage may also be used for spreader grafts for stenting of the internal nasal valve angle or batten grafts for bolstering the valve area during repair of he nasal valves.

Some degree of septal deviation is present in most individuals without accompanying functional impairment. In these cases, it is not considered medically necessary to correct the condition. Deviations in the septum can alter normal airflow, which may result in mucosal changes. This interference in airflow may also cause middle or inferior turbinate abnormalities. Sinus drainage may also be compromised by deviation of the septum and can result in recurrent or chronic sinusitis. The decision for septoplasty is not typically based solely on the degree of deviation alone, but rather based on the accompanying functional impairment in the form of obstructed nasal breathing and any resulting conditions, such as sinusitis. Generally, a case is considered refractory to medical management when there has been a sufficient period of treatment with antibiotics for infections, intranasal steroids, and decongestants (Mickelson and Benninger, 2001).

Rhinosinusitis is defined as symptomatic inflammation of the paranasal sinuses and nasal cavity. Sinusitis is almost always accompanied by inflammation of the contiguous nasal mucosa and therefore is referred to as rhinosinusitis. The American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) clinical practice guidelines for adult sinusitis note that rhinosinusitis can be classified by duration (Rosenfeld, et al., 2007):

- Acute: less than four weeks
- Subacute: four to twelve weeks
- Chronic: more than 12 weeks, with or without acute exacerbations
- Acute rhinosinusitis may be further classified by symptom pattern into acute bacterial rhinosinusitis (ABRS) or viral rhinosinusitis.
- Recurrent acute rhinosinusitis: four or more acute episodes per year of ABRS, without persistent symptoms between episodes
Surgical intervention is not appropriate for uncomplicated ABRS, but may have a role in managing recurrent ABRS and chronic rhinosinusitis when septal deviation is present and a factor in the condition. Septal deviation is an anatomic variant that might predispose to sinus obstruction and inflammation.

There may be situations where a septal deformity may not be causing specific sinus symptoms; however, its presence is preventing surgical access to other intranasal or paranasal areas such as the sinuses or turbinates. Septoplasty may be medically indicated when it is being performed to allow surgical access to these areas so that a medically necessary surgery may be successfully performed (American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery [AAO-HNS] b, 2012).

While the most common cause of epistaxis is idiopathic, it may also be caused by primary neoplasms and traumatic or iatrogenic causes (Simmen, et al., 2010). Septoplasty may be necessary in order to allow adequate access to a vessel that is causing recurrent epistaxis. In this situation, a septal deformity may cause abnormal air turbulence, severe mucosal drying and crusting, which can lead to recurrent nosebleeds. Identification of known or suspected bleeding site should be documented when the purpose of surgery is to control epistaxis. Septoplasty may decrease the frequency of the epistaxis episodes (Simmen, et al., 2010).

Extracorporeal septoplasty is a technique that involves removing the nasal septum, straightening the septum by various techniques and then reimplanting the septum (Fettman, et al., 2009). It is a procedure that may be utilized to correct very severe, complex nasal deformities. The techniques for straightening the septum include: the graft may be drilled, or partial-thickness releasing incisions can be scored into the concave side (Fettman, et al., 2009).

Literature Review
Rhee et al. (2008) reported on a systematic review that examined the literature supporting the efficacy of modern-day rhinoplasty techniques for treatment of nasal obstruction due to nasal valve compromise. The search included literature from January 1982 to August 2007. Forty-four articles met the inclusion criteria. The majority of the articles were classified as level four evidence (i.e., case series/case report) and two of the articles met level 2b (i.e., individual cohort study) criteria. Adjunctive procedures were performed in 33 studies and 11 of the studies involved correction of nasal valve collapse exclusively, without an adjunctive procedure. Although heterogeneity of the studies was noted in terms of study design, quality, intervention and outcome measures used, it was found that all articles generally supported the effectiveness of functional rhinoplasty techniques for treatment of nasal obstruction. The reported effectiveness ranged from 100% to 65%. The review found that there is substantial level four evidence to support the efficacy of modern-day rhinoplasty techniques for treatment of nasal obstruction due to nasal valve collapse.

Rhee et al. (2005) conducted a prospective, multicenter observational study to determine whether surgical treatment of the nasal valve improves disease-specific quality of life (QOL) and to identify clinical or demographic variables predictive of patients’ baseline QOL or change in QOL. It is noted in the report of the study that nasal valve, which is often associated with an external nasal deformity, has become increasingly recognized as a major reason for nasal airway obstruction. The study included 20 patients with nasal obstruction and a surgically treatable diagnosis of nasal valve compromise. Eligible patients were required to have a diagnosis of surgically treatable nasal valve compromise, either internal or external or both. The study also included patients with an associated septal deviation or turbinate hypertrophy or both. Procedures performed included: rhinoplasty that included nasal tip work and osteotomies; septoplasty or septal cartilage harvesting; placement of spreader grafts with or without flaring sutures to address the mid vault; turbinate reductions, and alar batten grafting. Significant improvement was noted from baseline to three months and six months after surgery.

Cleft Lip/Palate and Nasal Surgery
Congenital birth defects have a variety of presentations, including cleft nasal deformity, which may be associated with cleft lip and/or cleft palate, where the nasal structures are distorted and abnormally developed. Some congenital abnormalities may not be fully evident until some years later. Surgical correction of congenital birth defects may involve staged procedures, flaps, or grafts. Since the clefts of palate and lip vary considerably in size, shape, and degree of deformity, the planning of the stages of surgery should be individualized. Nasal correction associated with cleft lip/palate may be delayed until adolescence or performed at the time of initial repair (Nelson, et al., 2000). Children with cleft lip and/or palate usually have a deviated nasal septum due to the asymmetric bony base associated with the defect. Initially, the deviation may not cause airway problems due to
the facial cleft providing a patent, low-resistance airway passage. As a result of the repair of the facial cleft, the nasal resistance increases and the deviated septum may then cause nasal airway obstruction.

The American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association (ACP-CA) published consensus-based parameters for evaluation and treatment of patients with cleft lip/palate. Cleft lip deformity is always associated with nasal abnormalities (ACP-CA, 1993/2009; Friedman, et al., 2010). The degree of the nasal abnormality is related to the severity of the cleft lip. Nasal deformities associated with incomplete cleft lips are less severe than those associated with complete lip clefts. The goals of primary rhinoplasty include closure of the nasal floor, repositioning the lower lateral cartilages, and repositioning the alar base. The practice parameters note that (ACP-CA, 1993/2009):

- Although rhinoplasty and nasal septal surgery are usually advocated only after completion of nasal growth, earlier intervention for reasons of airway problems or nasal tip deformity may be indicated.
- Repair of the cleft lip nasal deformity can be accomplished with limited external incisions on the nose.
- The timing of nasal surgery should be discussed with the patient and parents so that the goals are understood and expectations are realistic.
- The patency of the nasal airway should be considered when planning either nasal reconstructive procedures or secondary velopharyngeal operations such as a pharyngeal flap or other type of pharyngoplasty.
- The nasal deformity is an integral part of the cleft lip. Depending on the severity, primary nasoplasty may be done at the time of the primary lip repair.

**Septoplasty and Rhinoplasty for Obstructive Sleep Apnea**

There is insufficient literature found to support the efficacy of rhinoplasty as a primary treatment for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), either performed alone or routinely as part of another procedure such as uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP). The limited number of studies contains biases related to small sample size, as well as limited follow-up and patient selection.

In a review article, Chen and Kushida (2003) noted that the exact role that obstructed nasal breathing plays in the cause of sleep disorders remains presumptive, and robust clinical studies are needed. Septoplasty may be considered medically necessary when there is documentation that obstructed nasal breathing due to septal deformity or deviation is causing difficulty tolerating nasal continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) and it is refractory to medical management. Positive airway pressure (PAP) treatment is considered an effective and widespread treatment of moderate OSA.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) recommendations (1999), OSA severity is determined by the severity of daytime sleepiness and of sleep-related obstructive breathing based on overnight monitoring. A severity level is specified for each component. The diagnosis of moderate OSA would include:

- Sleepiness: Unwanted sleepiness or involuntary sleep episodes occur during activities that require some attention, such as concerts, meetings or presentations. Symptoms produce moderate impairment of social or occupational function.
- Sleep related obstructive breathing events: ≥ 15 and ≤ 30 events per hour

**Use Outside of the US**

No relevant information.

**Summary**

Septoplasty is a surgical procedure that is performed to correct a defect or deformity of the nasal septum. It is considered medically necessary when there is a functional impairment that does not respond to medical management treatment. Rhinoplasty is a surgical procedure to correct nasal deformity or to change the appearance of the nose. It is not considered medically necessary when performed solely for the purpose of improving appearance. There are specific, limited conditions where rhinoplasty may be considered medically necessary.

**Coding/Billing Information**

**Note:** 1) This list of codes may not be all-inclusive.
2) Deleted codes and codes which are not effective at the time the service is rendered may not be eligible for reimbursement

**Rhinoplasty**

Covered when medically necessary only when coverage for the service is available. Benefit exclusions and limitations may apply:

**Note:** Code 21335 is included as it has been inappropriately submitted for rhinoplasty in absence of acute trauma.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPT® Codes</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>21335</td>
<td>Open treatment of nasal fracture; with concomitant open treatment of fractured septum</td>
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<tr>
<td>30400</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty, primary; lateral and alar cartilages and/or elevation of nasal tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30410</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty, primary; complete, external parts including bony pyramid, lateral and alar cartilages, and/or elevation of nasal tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30420</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty, primary; including major septal repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30430</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty, secondary: minor revision (small amount of nasal tip work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30435</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty, secondary intermediate revision (bony work with osteotomies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30450</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty, secondary major revision (nasal tip work and osteotomies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30460</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty for nasal deformity secondary to congenital cleft lip and/or palate, including columellar lengthening; tip only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30462</td>
<td>Rhinoplasty for nasal deformity secondary to congenital cleft lip and/or palate, including columellar lengthening; tip, septum, osteotomies</td>
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**Vestibular Stenosis Repair**

Covered when medically necessary:

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<th>CPT® Codes</th>
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<tr>
<td>30465</td>
<td>Repair of nasal vestibular stenosis (e.g., spreader grafting, lateral nasal wall reconstruction)</td>
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**Septoplasty**

Covered when medically necessary:

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<th>CPT® Codes</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>30520</td>
<td>Septoplasty or submucous resection, with or without cartilage scoring, contouring or replacement with graft</td>
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**References**


