Domal Stabilization Suture in Tip Rhinoplasty

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Objective: To investigate use of the domal stabilization suture as a complementary suture modification technique for refining and securing the nasal tip.

Methods: A single permanent or absorbable suture is placed via an open or cartilage delivery approach. The suture is placed along the cephalic borders of the domes at the medial third of the lateral crura bilaterally just posterior to the junction of the intermediate and lateral crura as a final step in tip rhinoplasty.

Results: The domal stabilization suture provided a means to help maintain dome symmetry in the setting of variable healing and scarring forces with no complications and no effect on tip rotation or projection.

Conclusion: Use of the domal stabilization suture enables correction of subtle changes in mild tip asymmetry and irregularities in domal height and provides subtle narrowing of the interdome distance.

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METHODS

INDICATIONS FOR PLACEMENT OF THE DOMAL STABILIZATION SUTURE

In conjunction with other nasal tip modification techniques, the domal stabilization suture seems to provide a reliable, predictable, and complementary tip refinement technique for use in rhinoplasty. While we believe an open rhinoplasty approach may afford the surgeon better exposure in performing this technique, the domal stabilization suture may still be used if a cartilage delivery approach is preferred. We identified no specific contraindications to use of this suture technique. All patients provided written consent for use of their photographs in scholarly publications.

TECHNIQUE

An open rhinoplasty or cartilage delivery approach may be used, as appropriate. After all tip modification techniques and desired changes to the lower lateral cartilages have been achieved, it is appropriate to place the domal stabilization suture. A 5.0 polydioxanone suture is placed between the medial third portions of the lateral crura bilaterally just posterior to the junction of the intermediate and lateral crus along their cephalic borders (Figure 2). The knot is placed in a buried interrupted fashion. The suture is tightened incrementally, which enables the surgeon to set the interdomal distance or reduce it if necessary. Care is taken not to secure the suture too tightly, which would result in excess lateral crural flare, an overly narrowed tip, and possible alar retraction or notching. We believe there is no need for vestibular skin dissection or hydrodissection with local anesthesia, although these can be performed without negative effects.

RESULTS

Over 2 years (January 1, 2004, through December 31, 2006), 100 patients underwent rhinoplasty performed by

Figure 1. Positioning of the domal stabilization suture (red) in relationship to bilateral intradomal sutures (blue).

Figure 2. Placement of 5.0 polydioxanone sutures at the cephalic border of the medial third of the right (A) and left (B) lateral crura just posterior to the junction of the right intermediate and lateral crus in an inverted fashion (superior view).

Figure 3. Final conformation of the domal stabilization suture (superior view).
one of us (D.G.B.) using the described suture technique. Mean (range) follow-up was 15 (6-24) months. Of the 100 rhinoplasties, 75 were primary and 25 were revision procedures. All patients had undergone previous rhinoplasty performed by other surgeons. Complications included in the evaluation process were tip asymmetry, bossae, alar notching or retraction, abnormal tip rotation, abnormal change in tip projection, and excessive narrowing of the nasal tip. No noted complications related to the dome stabilization suture technique were observed. Although no complications were noted in our review, we realize and expect that over time minor complications may be noted, although this may be scientifically difficult to prove as a direct consequence of the suture technique alone.

**REPORT OF CASES**

**CASE 1**

A 51-year-old man underwent elective rhinoplasty. Physical examination demonstrated a bulbous tip, alar-columellar disproportion, markedly deviated caudal septum, and dorsal convexity. The surgical procedure included an external approach with correction of the caudal septum using the doorstop technique described by Pastorek and Becker. The procedure included profile reduction and placement of spreader grafts and a columellar strut. In addition, he underwent cephalic resection domal sutures, an interdomal suture, and a dome stabilization suture. Preoperative and 12-month follow-up photographs are shown in Figure 4.

**CASE 2**

A 49-year-old man underwent elective rhinoplasty. Physical examination demonstrated an overprojected bulbous nasal tip. The surgical procedure included an external approach for tip rhinoplasty only, with cephalic resection, columellar strut placement, vertical dome division with resection of cartilage equally from the medial and lateral crura to deproject the nasal tip, and suture reconstitution using interrupted 5-0 clear polydioxonone sutures and a dome stabilization suture. Preoperative and 33-month follow-up photographs are shown in Figure 5.

**COMMENT**

The modern era of nasal tip surgery has introduced a philosophy of preservation and reorientation of nasal tip structures. Current methods seek to preserve and augment the existing support structures in conjunction with modifying the native cartilaginous framework. This approach seems to offer the surgeon greater control and a more predictable outcome. Nasal tip suture modification techniques provide a reliable and reversible addition to the myriad techniques that the rhinoplasty surgeon may use to achieve these goals. We present the domal stabilization suture as an addition to the various tip suture techniques.

A common goal of all suture modification techniques is precise placement and tension control. The success of these techniques is a function of surgeon knowledge about the dynamics that the techniques induce. Because each nasal tip anatomy is unique, the rhinoplasty surgeon must be proficient in using any number of tip modification techniques. Suture techniques accomplish different effects on the nasal tip cartilages depending on how they are placed. For example, a horizontal mattress suture that takes a bigger bite of the lateral crus compared with the medial crus (lateral crural steal)
causes rotation and projection. If a similar do-me-
biting horizontal mattress suture is placed with equal
bites of the medial and lateral crus, rotation is unaf-
fected. The technique described herein is designed to sta-
bilize the domal unit and has been conceived as a suture
technique that does not affect rotation or projection. Our
experience under direct visualization was that when placed
as described, this suture does not seem to affect change
in rotation or projection.

The domal stabilization suture provides a reliable and
predictable complement to other nasal tip suture modi-
fication techniques. After individual domal modifica-
tions have been completed, the domal stabilization su-
ture provides a means to unify, align, and stabilize the
individual domal segments. This domal unification fur-
ther augments tip support. By positioning the suture in
the exact anatomical position at the cephalic border of
each of the lateral crura just posterior to the junction of
the intermediate and lateral crus, the domes are prop-
ery aligned within the transverse plane. We have found
that the stabilization suture is effective in both cases in
which the dome has or has not been divided. When dome
division has been performed, suture reconstitution of the
medial and lateral crus with simple interrupted sutures
is undertaken in all cases. In this setting, the dome sta-
bilization suture is placed in the same relative location
to the domes, just lateral to the dome on the lateral cru-
ral aspect. Domal interruption and suture reconstitutio-
donot seem to substantively affect the ability of this
suture to provide an additional degree of stabilization to
the domes.

The unpredictability of postoperative healing forces
can confound the aesthetic results of many experienced
rhinoplastic surgeons. The separation of the skin–soft-
tissue envelope from the cartilaginous framework of the
nasal tip can lead to unpredictable soft-tissue contractu-
re postoperatively. This “shrink wrap” effect can cause
aesthetic asymmetry over time if adequate support mech-
nisms are not maintained or added during tip rhino-
plasty. Suture modification techniques may help to pre-
serve and augment these intrinsic tip support mechanisms.
The domal stabilization suture provides added stabilization
of the nasal tip in the early healing phase (Stephen S.
Park, MD, oral communication, University of Penn-
sylvania Rhinoplasty Course, November 3–4, 2006). The
technique provides a complementary means to main-
tain strength and symmetry of the domes in the setting
of unpredictable healing forces postoperatively.

Risks and complications specific to the domal stabi-
lization suture involve possible alar notching or retrac-
tion caused by excess flare of the caudal border of the
lateral crura when the suture is secured too tightly. This
can be averted by incrementally tightening the suture
and redraping the skin–soft-tissue envelope to assess the
suture effects on the nasal tip. An overly narrowed nasal
tip can also result if the domal stabilization suture is se-
cured too tightly, markedly reducing the interdomal dis-
tance. Domal asymmetry may result if the suture is not
passed along the same anatomical position at the cep-
halic borders of the lateral crura. This technique is re-

versible, and if these complications are observed intra-
operatively, the suture can be removed and replaced until
the precise result is achieved. Complications involving
the suture material can include suture extrusion, stitch
abscess, and nasal tip infection.13 We have observed none
of these complications.

In conclusion, the domal stabilization suture seems
to provide a safe and effective means to unify, set, and
stabilize the domal complex at the completion of tip rhi-
oplasty. It does provide the surgeon a greater degree of
control over postoperative healing forces. This tech-
ique may afford the rhinoplasty surgeon another tool
in nasal tip rhinoplasty.

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