

Blocked nose at night (nasal obstruction)

A blocked nose at night pushes patients to breathe through the mouth, which brings snoring, a dry mouth and tired mornings. Most of the blockage sits at the nasal valve. How to measure it, find the cause, choose between calming the lining, holding the walls open, and fixing the frame.

Saiyed Abdal · 15 Oct 2026 · Frido Care Academy

CLINICAL SUMMARY

What it is	Obstruction concentrated at the nasal valve, the narrowest segment of the airway and about half of nasal resistance. A soft lateral wall is drawn inward on each breath in.
Why it matters	Congestion on 5 or more nights a month goes with habitual snoring, daytime sleepiness and unrefreshing sleep; allergic congestion carried 1.8 times the odds of moderate to severe sleep-disordered breathing.
Measure	NOSE score (0 to 100) at baseline and after two weeks: 30 to 50 moderate, 55 to 75 severe.
Assess	History, NOSE, the lateral walls on a quiet breath in, the cheek-pull (Cottle) test and, if available, peak nasal inspiratory flow with and without a strip.
First line	Calm the lining: saline rinse, intranasal steroid if allergic, decongestant for 5 days at most, head raised. At least 6 weeks before ENT referral.
Refer	Urgently for one-sided bloody discharge, foul smell, cheek numbness, visual or dental change, or neurological signs; to a sleep clinic for pauses or gasping in sleep.

NIGHT-TIME ADJUNCT

Frido Nasal Strip Pro ₹499 ~~₹1,000~~

Nasal Strips for occasional use, such as a cold or a flight. Holds the valve open while worn. It doesn't treat the lining, the septum or sleep apnoea.



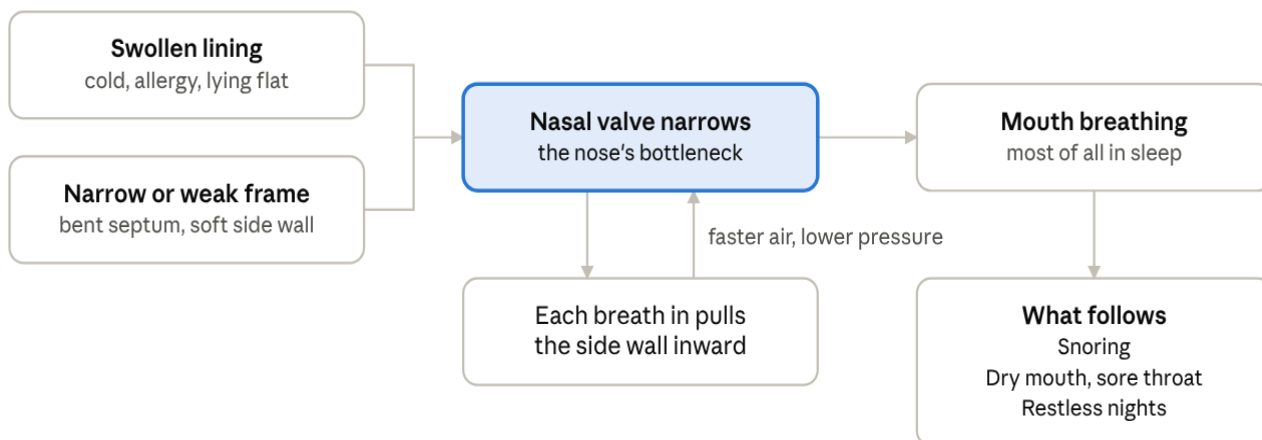
Patient view

Scan to open, or send it to your patient: the 1:55 video, home plan and safety-net in plain words.

01 What a blocked nose at night is

Most of the blockage sits at the **nasal valve**, a narrow slit just inside the nostrils between the soft side wall, the septum and the lower turbinate. It is "the bottleneck of the nose" and causes almost half of its resistance to airflow. Air speeds up through the slit, pressure drops, and a soft side wall gets sucked inward on each breath in ([Bloching 2008](#)).

A narrowed nasal valve pushes breathing into the mouth



How a narrowed nasal valve leads to mouth breathing: causes, the suction loop, what follows.

Typical signs: mouth breathing at night, snoring, waking with a dry mouth or sore throat, and nostrils that cave in on a normal breath in.

02 How it affects the patient

In a study of 4,927 adults, a stuffy nose on 5 or more nights a month went with snoring most nights, daytime sleepiness and waking unrefreshed. Allergy-related congestion carried 1.8 times the odds of moderate to severe breathing problems in sleep (Young 1997).

03 Measuring it: the NOSE score

Five items, each rated 0 (no problem) to 4 (severe) for the past month; add them up and multiply by 5 (NOSE scale, AAO-HNS). It takes the patient 30 seconds, and the patient view carries it as a self-check.

OVER THE PAST MONTH, HOW MUCH OF A PROBLEM WAS...	SCORE (0–4)
Nasal congestion or stuffiness	
Nasal blockage	
Trouble breathing through my nose	
Trouble sleeping	
Not enough air through my nose during exercise	

5 to 25 is mild, 30 to 50 moderate, 55 to 75 severe and 80 to 100 extreme (BackTable). Score again after two weeks of whatever you try.

04 Why it happens

Anything that swells the lining or narrows the frame shrinks the valve, and the clue usually tells you which.

CAUSE	WHAT IT DOES	THE CLUE
Allergy (dust mites, pollen, pets, mould)	Swells the lining within minutes of contact (NHS)	Sneezing and itchy eyes

CAUSE	WHAT IT DOES	THE CLUE
Irritants and hormones (smoke, fumes, weather, pregnancy)	Swells the lining without an allergy (NHS)	Starts with the trigger
Decongestant spray used too long	Rebound swelling after 5 to 7 days of daily use, sometimes 3 (StatPearls)	Worse each time the spray wears off
Bent septum or large turbinates	A fixed narrowing at the valve (Bloching 2008)	One side always worse
Weak side walls (ageing, past surgery)	The side wall is sucked in with each breath (Bloching 2008)	Pulling the cheek outward helps
Lying flat	Nasal resistance rose on lying down in all 12 studies that measured it (Calvo-Henríquez 2021)	Worse at night than in the day

05 How it's diagnosed

Put what the patient feels next to what the nose shows, because the two often disagree (Yepes-Nuñez 2013). That means the history and NOSE score, a look inside the nose with the cheek-pull (Cottle) test, and if needed a sniff-flow test, a camera exam (nasal endoscopy) or allergy tests (Ottaviano 2019; West Suffolk NHS; NHS North West Allergy Network). A sleep study is needed when snoring comes with pauses or gasping (NHS).

OFTEN CALLED	WHAT IT MIGHT BE	WHAT POINTS TO IT
"Just snoring"	Sleep apnoea	Pauses, gasping or choking in sleep and heavy daytime tiredness (NHS)
"A cold that won't clear"	Allergy	Sneezing and itchy eyes around dust, pets or pollen (NHS)
"I need my spray"	Rebound congestion	The block returns worse as each dose wears off; stopping the spray is the treatment (StatPearls)

06 Opening the nose: the options

Leaving it rarely works: the body just switches to mouth breathing, and pulling harder through a narrow valve sucks the side walls further in (Bloching 2008). Three quick fixes backfire:

- **A decongestant spray every night:** used for more than 5 days, it can make the block worse (NHS).
- **Menthol rubs:** the nose feels clearer (Eccles 2003), but feeling open and being open are separate things (Jones 1989).
- **Taping the mouth shut:** it forces nose breathing without opening the nose, and is risky when the nose is blocked (Rhee 2025).

What does work falls into three routes.

Three routes open a blocked nose, each for a different cause

Match the route to what is narrowing the airway

ROUTE 1	ROUTE 2	ROUTE 3
Calm the lining For: colds, allergies, irritants, lying flat <hr/> Saltwater rinse Steroid nasal spray Antihistamine for allergy Decongestant, 5 days max Sleeping head-up <hr/> Treats the swelling	Hold the walls open For: side walls that cave in on a breath in <hr/> External nasal strip Internal nasal dilator <hr/> Works only while worn	Fix the frame For: a bent septum, large turbinates, weak cartilage <hr/> Septoplasty Turbinate reduction Nasal valve surgery <hr/> Surgery, decided by an ENT

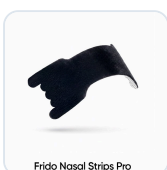
Routes can be combined: a strip on top of a rinse and a spray

Three routes to an open nose: calm the lining, hold the walls open, fix the frame.

ROUTE	OPTIONS	WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS
1. Calm the lining	<u>Saltwater rinse</u> , steroid spray, antihistamine for allergy, decongestant for 5 days at most, sleeping head-up	Rinsing eased hay-fever symptoms across 14 trials (<u>Head 2018</u>); a steroid spray is the first treatment for seasonal allergies but needs daily use for days to weeks (<u>AAAAI/ACAAI</u> ; <u>NHS</u>)
2. Hold the walls open	External nasal strip, internal nasal dilator	Peak sniff airflow was 66 litres a minute with nothing, 102 with a strip and 139 with an internal dilator (<u>Dinardi 2014</u>); neither lowers sleep apnoea counts (<u>Camacho 2016</u>)
3. Fix the frame	Septoplasty, turbinate or valve surgery	In 378 adults with a bent septum, surgery beat sprays: symptom scores of 19.9 against 39.5 at 6 months, lower being better (<u>NAIROS</u> , <u>Carrie 2023</u>)

NHS guidance tries rinses and steroid sprays for at least 6 weeks before referring on (NHS Tayside).

07 Where the Frido Nasal Strip Pro fits

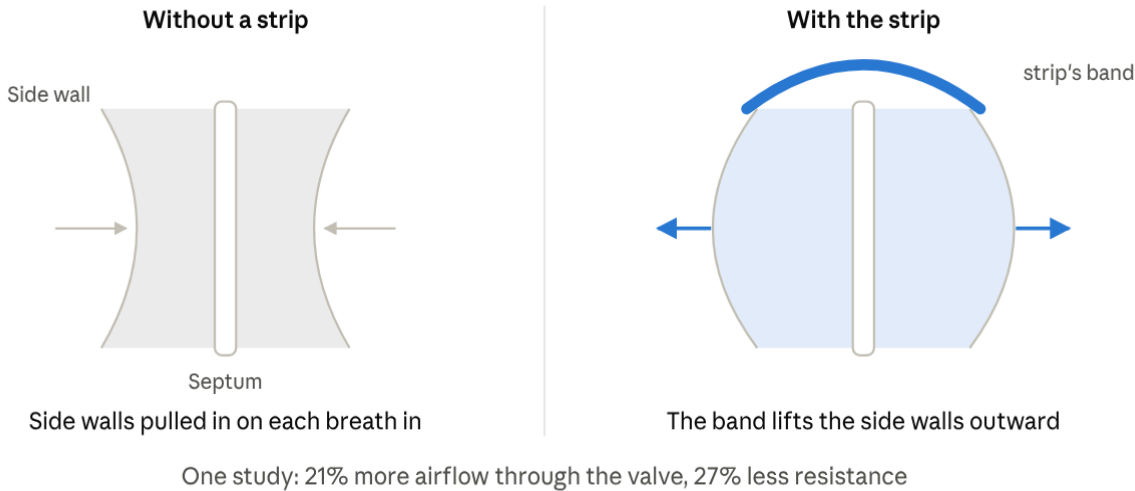


Frido Nasal Strip Pro

₹499 for 15 (MRP ₹1,000), prices as of 15 Oct 2026 · [product page](#)

Frido's option sits in route 2. A strip works like a leaf spring: it lifts the side walls outward and holds the valve open on each breath in (Bloching 2008). In one study a strip raised airflow through the valve by 21% and cut resistance by 27% (Dinardi 2014).

A strip lifts the side walls and widens the nasal valve



Front view of the nasal valve, without and with a strip.

Nasal Strips		DEFAULT
		Nasal Strip Pro
Price for 15 (MRP)	₹399 ₹900	₹499 ₹1,000
Build	Transparent strip	Breathable black non-woven fabric
Grip	Up to 12 hours	Stronger sweat-resistant adhesive, up to 12 hours
Rating	4.6/5 (317 reviews)	4.7/5 (472 reviews)
Best for	Occasional use, such as a cold or a flight	Overnight wear, the use it is designed for

Prices as listed on myfrido.com on 15 Oct 2026; check the product page for today's price.

Neither strip clears mucus, treats an allergy or straightens a septum.

08 Does the strip solve the main problem?

VERDICT: PARTLY

It fixes one cause of a blocked nose at night, side walls caving in at the valve, and only while it's on.

PART OF THE PROBLEM	SOLVED?	WHY
Side walls caving in	Yes, while worn	Holds the walls out (Dinardi 2014)
Swollen lining	No	Works on the outside walls only; route 1 treats the lining (Bloching 2008)
Bent septum	No	Can't move the septum (Bloching 2008)
Snoring	Sometimes	Eased it in long-term rhinitis (Dinardi 2014), but not in snorers using strips with breathing exercises (Ieto 2015)
Sleep apnoea	No	No drop in apnoea counts across 14 studies (Camacho 2016)

Can say: holds the front of the nose open while you sleep; drug-free; works alongside rinses and sprays. **Can't say:** cures a blocked nose, treats sleep apnoea, stops snoring, boosts sports performance ([Dinardi 2020](#)) or "clinically proven". We found no study of Frido's own strips.

09 Which Frido strip to choose

Best fit: the Pro. A strip only works while it stays on, and the Pro has the stronger grip Frido designs for overnight wear ([Frido](#)). The regular strip suits occasional use, such as a cold or a flight.

Make it work: wash and dry the nose, place the strip across the widest part just above the nostril flare, and wet it before peeling it off ([Frido](#)). Suggest it when the cheek-pull test helps: that is the patient whose side walls are part of the problem.

In the Frido Care app, add a strip to the plan only when your findings call for one; you accept, edit or drop every suggestion. Frido ships it to the patient directly.

10 Assessment, referral and plan

Assess: history, NOSE score, the side walls on a quiet breath in, the cheek-pull test and, if available, peak nasal inspiratory flow with and without a strip ([Bloching 2008](#); [Ottaviano 2019](#)).

Refer urgently for one-sided bloody discharge, a foul smell, cheek numbness, changes in vision or teeth, or neurological signs ([NHS Tayside](#)), and to a sleep clinic for pauses or gasping in sleep ([NHS](#)).

SETTLE Weeks 0–2

- [Saltwater rinse](#); stop decongestant overuse ([NHS GGC](#)).
- A steroid spray from a pharmacist or doctor if allergic.
- Head raised at night.
- A strip at night if the cheek-pull test helps.

RESTORE Weeks 2–6

- Daily steroid spray.
- [Tongue and throat exercises](#) if snoring ([Ieto 2015](#)).
- Re-score NOSE.

REVIEW Week 6 on

- Score below 30: keep what works.
- Still 30 or more, or one-sided: refer to ENT ([NHS Tayside](#)).

11 Talking to the patient

Explain it in plain words

"Just inside your nostrils is a small doorway, the nasal valve. When the lining swells or the soft sides get sucked in, it closes, and you breathe through your mouth, which brings the snoring and the tired mornings. Once we know what's closing it, there's a fix for each cause."

Their nightly routine

Rinse if stuffy, use the steroid spray if prescribed, put on a strip if pulling the cheek outward helps, and sleep with the head raised (Calvo-Henríquez 2021). No mouth taping (Rhee 2025), and no decongestant for more than 5 days (NHS). Re-score after two weeks.

Send the patient view

The patient view has the explainer, the NOSE self-check, the nightly plan and the safety-net in plain words, and leaves out everything clinical. Send it with **Send to patient** at the top of this page, or switch to it with the toggle to go through it together.

Safety-net every patient: come back sooner for blood from one side, a foul smell, gasping in sleep, a side that's always blocked, or no change after 6 weeks (NHS Tayside; NHS).

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Exercises and routines that help

EXERCISE	HOW MUCH	DEMO	HOW-TO
Tongue and throat exercises	2–3 sessions a day, at least 10 minutes in total, for about 3 months	Watch	Sleep Foundation
Nose-breathing practice	Mouth closed, one nostril at a time	Watch	Sleep Foundation
Saltwater rinse	3 times a day until clear, up to 2 weeks	Watch	NHS ENT leaflet

In a 3-month trial, tongue and throat exercises roughly halved measured snoring (Ieto 2015); a Cochrane review found smaller gains (Cochrane 2020).

Sources

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Frido Care Academy is written for physiotherapists and doctors. This guide summarises published evidence to support, not replace, clinical judgement.
Online version with the patient explainer and exercise demos: <https://care.myfrido.com/academy/blocked-nose-at-night/>