

Continually Stuffy Noses Affect Face Development

Parents, does your child's nose always seem to be stopped up? Did you know that this could affect the way they look, even as an adult?

Have you seen children and adults with long faces? I don't mean sad faces, but actually long faces? Have you noticed that they often have difficulty breathing through the nose? Often their mouth will be open slightly because it's easier for them to breathe that way.

There is a connection between mouth breathing and improper development of the bones of the face. So, does the breathing pattern cause the long face or does the long face cause the breathing problem? The answer is both.

So which came first... the chicken or the egg? Actually, in this case, the continual breathing problem can in fact cause the bones of the face to grow differently. How does this occur?

When a young child continually mouth breathes, the jaw rotates downward to open the mouth. Over the years, this causes the jaw joint to actually grow differently, resulting in the jaw growing more downward and less forward.

Another result of the mouth being continually slightly open is that the tongue does not rest in the roof of the mouth. The tongue is a very powerful orthodontic and orthopedic force. Proper tongue position is necessary for proper tooth position and proper growth of the palate. Results are often a long, narrow palate with flared upper front teeth.

When the palate is narrow, the nasal passages also tend to be narrower and more easily clogged. Thus the "vicious cycle" is completed. Even as adults, these folks are more prone to constant blocked nasal passages due to their constricted size.

Now doesn't heredity provide the main input into facial development? Yes, but it's not the only factor. If the child's genes say "short, round face", then no noticeable damage will likely be seen. If the child's genes already say "normal", or worse, "long, narrow face", then mouth breathing may have a big negative effect.

In summary, if your child is always stuffed up, talk to your child's physician. Don't worry about an occasional cold or sinus infection. The constant problems are usually allergy related. Reduce allergy producing things in the house (including smoking). See an allergy doctor if you need to, but try not to let the problem go untreated.

Also, a dentist trained in orthodontics can easily expand a growing child's palate and help redirect the direction of jaw growth. Addressing the problems during the years of growth is critical. Once growth is complete, surgery is usually needed to help correct the problems.

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