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# Everyone Tried to Talk Me Out of a Nose Job at 26—I Got One Anyway

The only opinion that matters is frankly my own.

BY SIENA GAGLIANO | PUBLISHED 2 DAYS AGO IN FEATURES

LIFE
in
PLASTIC

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*Nothing gets us more excited than talking about a not-so-little tweakment or a nip-tuck procedure. In the spirit of transparency, Marie Claire's aesthetics column, Life in Plastic, delivers a first-hand peak into what goes on behind the doctor's door.*

I've wanted a nose job for as long as I can remember.

I'm an Italian girl who inherited nearly every feature from my dad, including the bump on the bridge of my nose. By 16, I was already imagining what I'd look like without it. The irony? My dad had a rhinoplasty himself. Yet whenever I brought up getting a nose job, he refused to weigh in. His response was always the same: *"It's your face; you're the one who has to live with it*." My mom leaned more toward the *"don't do it."* But honestly, I'd been thinking about it for so long that their opinions didn't *really* matter.

If there's one thing I've learned after years of covering cosmetic procedures professionally, it's that everyone has an opinion about your face. Tell someone you're considering rhinoplasty, and you'll inevitably hear some version of "But you're pretty already," or the latest and greatest nose-job comment: "An angel will lose its wings." Whether I changed my nose—or any part of myself with plastic surgery—was never anyone else's call.

While my friends were saving for apartments and designer bags, I was quietly putting money aside for a future nose job. The challenge was never deciding whether I'd do it; it was finding a surgeon I trusted enough to actually do it. A rhinoplasty scared me more than my breast reduction. If something went wrong with my breasts, I could disguise them under a sweater. A nose sits in the center of your face. I couldn't exactly hide it away while I figured out how I felt about it.

I spent nearly a decade researching before I ever booked a consultation. I wasn't looking for a tiny ski-slope nose. I liked my face. I just didn't like one angle. A trendy, copy-and-paste nose would look wrong on me, and I knew it. I wanted my side profile to feel like it belonged to the same person I saw straight-on in the mirror.

I finally booked a consultation with NYC-based board-certified plastic surgeon Adam Kolker, MD FACS. His results looked incredibly natural from what I'd seen (including IRL with *Marie Claire* Beauty Director Hannah Baxter), and I wanted to know what he could do with my nose. Here's everything that happened with my nose job, from the initial consultation to the final results, eight months after surgery.

## My Rhinoplasty Consultation

By the time I walked into Dr. Kolker's office, I wasn't looking for someone to convince me. If anything, I was looking for reasons not to go through with it. His name had come up repeatedly in conversations with former patients and friends in the beauty industry, but I still walked in a little skeptical. Liking someone else's result and trusting a surgeon with your own face are two very different things.

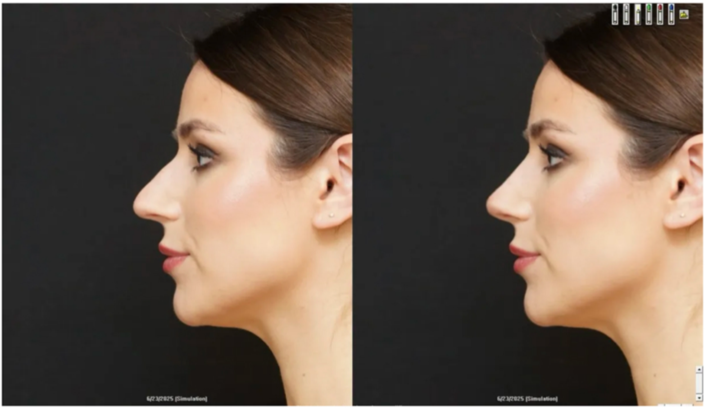
Dr. Kolker has a calm, unhurried presence. He listened far more than any other surgeon I spoke to about my nose, and I felt comfortable asking every question I'd been sitting on for years. My biggest concern wasn't whether he could remove the bump; it was whether he'd try to give me something I'd never asked for.

Specifically, I was terrified of ending up with an overdone profile.

I'd spent more hours than I'd like to admit editing my side profile in FaceTune. And the thing is, my edits were never dramatic. I wasn't pinching my nose into a button or carving out some exaggerated curve. I was mostly just straightening the profile and bringing it in slightly. So when Dr. Kolker pulled up the digital imaging during my consultation, I immediately went looking for one thing: the bridge.

The simulation showed a straighter profile. I felt like he understood how little I wanted to change. Remember, though: the simulated image is not exactly what your nose will look like. It's just there to make sure you and your surgeon are on the same page.

“The goal is refinement rather than transformation, creating a nose that fits the face rather than draws attention to itself,” Dr. Kolker says. Though, as he explains, a smaller change doesn't necessarily mean an easier surgery. “Small refinements require tremendous precision because the margin for error is often narrower.”



My simulated image during my consultation with Dr. Kolker.
(Image credit: Future)

I had another concern too. I genuinely liked how my nose looked from the front—specifically how narrow it appeared. I'd heard that reducing a dorsal hump, which is the raised area on the bridge of the nose, could make a nose look wider head-on, which felt like trading one concern for another.

“If you imagine the nose as a pyramid, the dorsal hump represents its apex,” Dr. Kolker explains. “When that apex is lowered, the roof of the pyramid is effectively opened.” Without additional refinement, he says, the bridge can appear wider from the front. To address that, he uses osteotomies—controlled adjustments of the nasal bones—to bring the sidewalls inward and close that opening. “The goal is not simply to reduce a hump, but to create harmony between the profile and frontal views so the nose appears balanced from every angle."

The more we talked, the more I realized the bump wasn't actually my biggest issue. If I could have kept a slight bump but reduced how far my nose projected from my face, I probably would have been happy. What bothered me most was how far my nose extended outward in profile. In rhinoplasty terms, that's called projection. A projected nose extends farther away from the face; a deprojected nose sits closer to it.

Having a name for that helped me explain what I'd been trying to accomplish with all those photo edits. I wanted my nose to feel a little less prominent every time I turned to the side, without losing the features I liked.

As it happened, Dr. Kolker's office had a last-minute opening three months out. After wanting this for nearly a decade, I took it as a sign. Give me too much time, and I'd find a way to talk myself out of it.

I booked the rhinoplasty before I could overthink it.

## Preparing for Rhinoplasty Surgery

A few weeks before surgery, I had a pre-op phone call with one of Dr. Kolker's nurses. After spending years thinking about rhinoplasty, I assumed I more or less knew what to expect. Then I received the pre-op packet. Thorough would be an understatement. It covered everything: which medications and supplements to avoid, which vitamins to take, what to buy before surgery, how to sleep afterward. Suddenly the procedure I'd spent years researching felt very real.

"Rhinoplasty is a process, not just a procedure," Dr. Kolker says. "The operation itself is only one component of a successful outcome." Preparation, he explains, helps reduce factors that can complicate recovery, including bleeding and swelling. And the instructions don't stop once you leave the operating room. "A thoughtful recovery protocol helps control swelling, supports tissue healing, and allows the nose to settle as predictably as possible," he notes.

I was extremely organized and prepped AM & PM baggies filled with all the vitamins and antibiotics I had to take the week leading up to surgery.

(Image credit: Future)

In the week leading up to surgery, I followed his office's instructions, which included a regimen of vitamin C, zinc, vitamin B complex, and Arnica Montana. I also applied antibiotic ointment inside my nostrils. It was a lot to keep track of, but I liked having specific instructions. At least I knew what I was supposed to be doing to ensure my rhinoplasty was successful.

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## The Night Before Rhinoplasty Surgery

The night before surgery, I did what my mom jokingly called "nesting." I wasn't having a baby, but I did apparently need my entire apartment in order before anyone could operate on my nose.

After picking up my prescriptions and organizing everything I'd need for the first week of recovery, I deep-cleaned my apartment, washed my sheets, and stocked my bedside table. My boyfriend would be there to take care of me, but I wanted everything ready before we left in the morning.

## Rhinoplasty Surgery Day

The morning of surgery started with one final item from Dr. Kolker's pre-op checklist: fresh sheets on the bed. After showering, skipping my usual skincare and makeup, and double-checking everything I'd need for recovery, my boyfriend and I headed to the surgical center.

One of the biggest surprises was how different it felt from a hospital. Dr. Kolker operates out of a private surgical facility, and I was brought back quickly. The staff showed me where I'd recover afterward, and I recognized the nurses and other team members from months of appointments and emails. By surgery day, everyone knew my name, and I knew theirs.

That familiarity helped. My boyfriend received updates throughout the procedure, which lasted about four hours. For someone who had spent so long thinking about this, I was surprisingly calm.

Before heading into the OR, Dr. Kolker came in with a surgical marker and walked through the plan one more time. No overdone slope. No dramatic transformation. As little change to my front view as possible. A softer, less projected profile. I was glad we went over it again, even though we'd discussed those same goals at every appointment. Then it was time.

## Immediately After Rhinoplasty Surgery

Hi! It's me! My boyfriend snapped this lovely post-procedure picture from the recovery room.
(Image credit: Future)

In the weeks leading up to surgery, one of my most irrational fears had nothing to do with the procedure itself. I was convinced I was going to wake up from anesthesia and say something embarrassing. Once the thought entered my head, I couldn't shake it.

Post-op was completely uneventful. I woke up with a cast on my nose, exactly as expected, and was genuinely surprised to see almost no bruising. Through the swelling, my nose already looked cute. I hadn't needed internal nasal splints, and I could breathe surprisingly well—something I'd assumed would be off the table for a while.

“The need for internal splints depends entirely on the specific maneuvers performed during surgery,” Dr. Kolker explains. “Some patients benefit from temporary internal support to stabilize tissues during healing, while others don’t.” In my case, they weren't necessary.

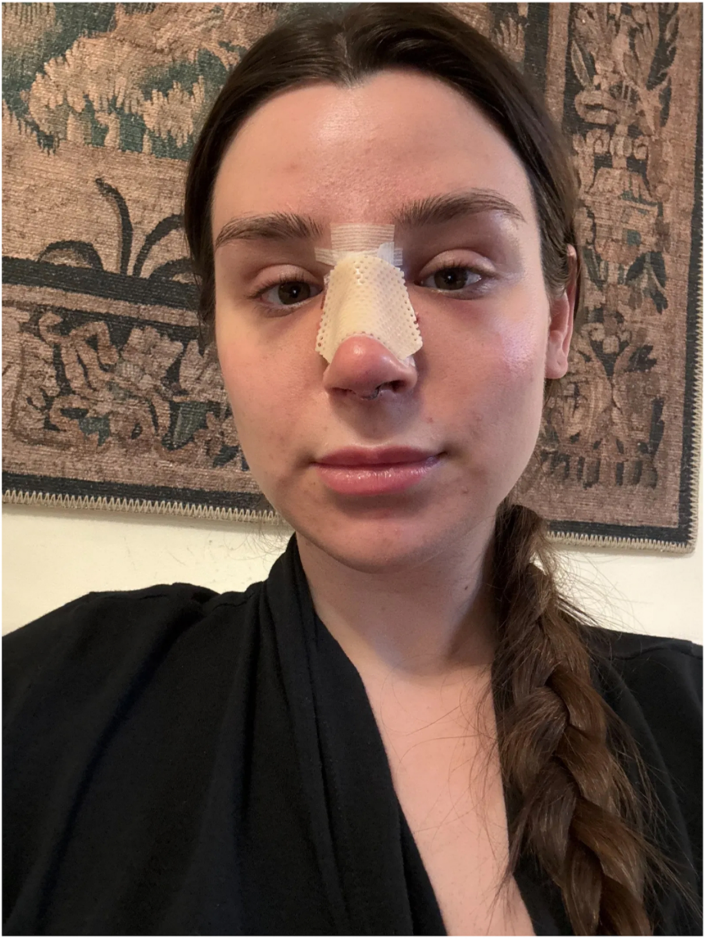
Mostly, I was just tired. I vaguely remember being very affectionate toward my boyfriend, everyone laughing, and not much else. We got an Uber, went back to my apartment, and I climbed into the clean sheets I'd put on that morning. I slept through most of the rest of the day and took my first antibiotic that night.

## Day Two Post-Rhinoplasty

By day two, I kept waiting for the swelling and bruising everyone talks about. Virtually no bruising, very little swelling—I felt fine. Every time I looked in the mirror, I kept thinking the same thing: *Really? That’s it?*

I spent the day taking it easy and sticking closely to Dr. Kolker's recovery protocol. Vitamins, arnica, medications, hydration—I treated it like a part-time job. I don't know how much of my experience came down to luck versus anything else, but I'd prepared myself to look and feel much worse than I did.

## Days Three and Four Post-Rhinoplasty



I'm definitely swollen and have slight bruising, but this is about the worst it got!

(Image credit: Future)

Days three and four were when the swelling finally showed up. This was the peak of it for me, and even then it wasn't nearly as dramatic as I'd expected. My cheeks puffed up, and I called myself a chipmunk for a couple of days. Still virtually no bruising. More importantly, I felt good.

My biggest complaint was boredom. I'd mentally prepared to be stuck in bed feeling miserable, but I could get around on my own and take care of myself. My boyfriend was ready and willing to help. I honestly didn't need much of it. Mostly, I was just counting down the days until the cast came off.

## Days Five and Six Post-Rhinoplasty

By days five and six, the swelling had started to come down, and I was officially done sitting inside my apartment. The problem was, I still had a cast on my nose. My solution: I stopped caring.

I took it easy—I wasn't running around Manhattan or squeezing through crowded subway cars. Mostly I was wandering to a few shops near my apartment and walking around the neighborhood. But after those first few days cooped up, I felt so like myself that staying inside was starting to feel harder than leaving. This is New York City—someone walking around in a cast barely registers.

## Cast Removal Day

Hi from cast-removal day at Dr. Kolker's!
(Image credit: Future)

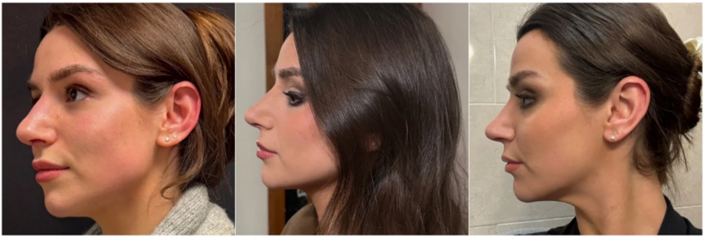
I was far more nervous for cast removal than I'd been for surgery.

By day seven, I'd spent enough time on rhinoplasty forums and TikTok to know that cast-removal day can be emotionally brutal. I'd seen swollen noses and plenty of panicked reactions. I walked into Dr. Kolker's office fully prepared to dislike what I saw and remind myself that results take time.

Then the cast came off, and I was relieved.

Was my nose swollen? Absolutely—it was huge. But I could already see the profile we'd talked about. The bump was gone, my nose looked less projected, and I still recognized myself from the front.

I'd prepared so thoroughly for the possibility of hating it that I hadn't given much thought to the alternative. I actually liked it, swelling and all. I knew it would go down.



Left to right: Immediately after the cast removal; the next day after the cast removal; a week after the cast removal.

(Image credit: Future)

## Six Weeks Post-Op

At my six-week appointment, Dr. Kolker gave me a small steroid injection to address lingering swelling in my tip and supratip area.

For a few days afterward, my nose looked noticeably more swollen and slightly lopsided. The swelling eventually settled, and everything evened out. My tip still looked swollen, though, and my profile appeared to pinch slightly. I, of course, freaked out. But Dr. Kolker reassured me that it's all part of the healing process and I just had to wait it out. Spoiler: he was right.

## Three Months Post-Op

By the three-month mark, the swelling was becoming less noticeable. I still woke up some mornings with one side puffier than the other, and I noticed more swelling after flying. “Uneven swelling is one of the most common and normal aspects of rhinoplasty recovery,” Dr. Kolker says.

He explains that differences in tissue thickness and drainage, along with what was done during surgery, can cause the two sides to settle at different rates.

I was getting used to those fluctuations. My nose could look a little different from one morning to the next, but overall, I was happy with where it was heading.

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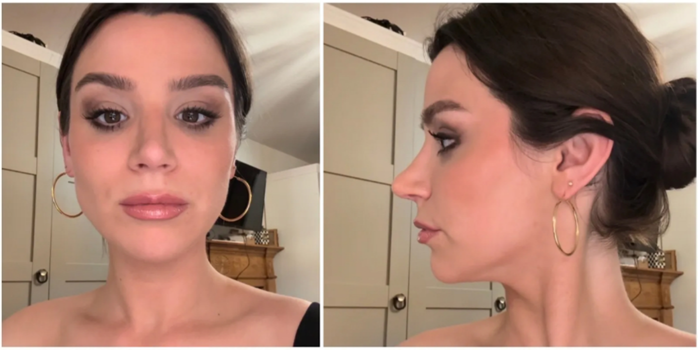
## Months Three to Four Post-Op

This is when I started noticing the biggest shifts. As the swelling in my tip went down, it appeared to drop slightly, and my profile started looking straighter.



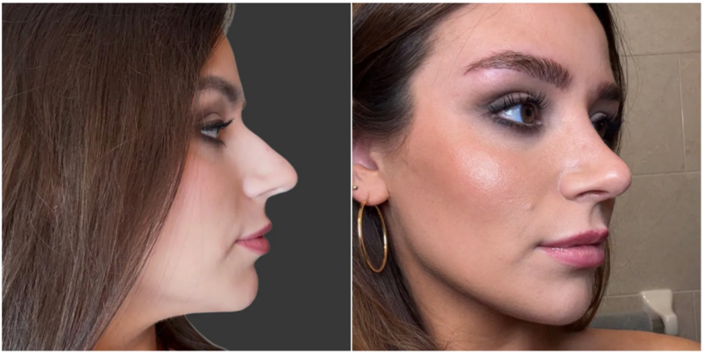
This was taken about three and a half months post-op. You can clearly see the uneven swelling along the bridge of my nose, as well as swelling at the tip. Both continued to settle over time, with the final results becoming more apparent around the eight-month to one-year mark.

(Image credit: Future)

“The tip of the nose almost always takes longest to settle,” Dr. Kolker explains. During surgery, the skin and soft tissues are lifted from the framework underneath, and the lymphatic and vascular connections need time to reestablish themselves afterward. “While much of the swelling resolves within the first few months, subtle refinement continues for many months thereafter."

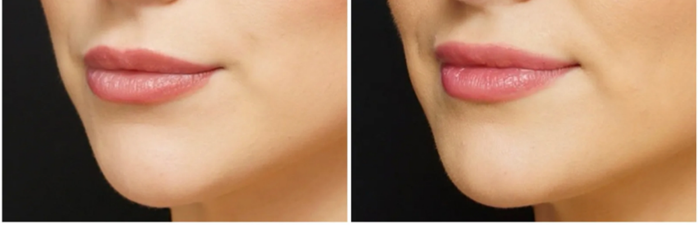
I still had the occasional bout of uneven swelling—especially along the bridge of my nose from front-on—but I could see more definition. This was much closer to the profile I'd pictured during all those years of thinking about surgery, and I was excited.

## My Before-and-After Rhinoplasty Results



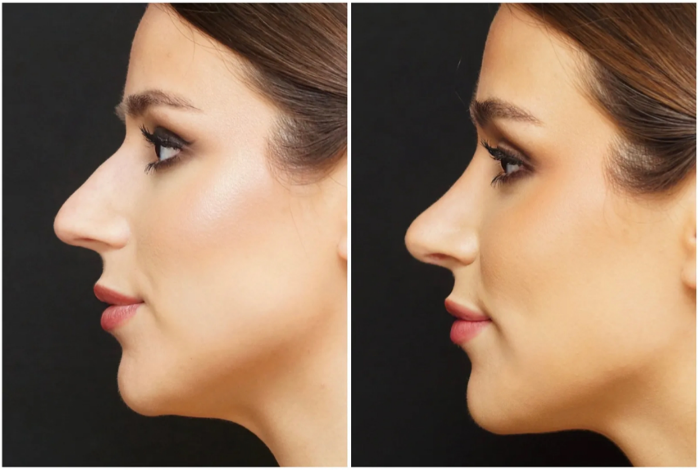
(*Left*) Before my rhinoplasty. (*Right*) Eight months after my rhinoplasty.

(Image credit: Future)



Side-by-side close-ups of my nose taken by Dr. Kolker, showing how my profile is taking shape at the six-month mark.

(Image credit: Future)



Side-by-side close-ups of my nose taken by Dr. Kolker, showing how my profile is taking shape at the six-month mark.

(Image credit: Future)

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## The Takeaway

I had my surgery in mid-February, and now, nearly eight months later, the teeny tiny things are finally evening out. My nose looks beautiful. I love it, and I'd make the same decision again. But when they tell you rhinoplasty takes a full year to settle, believe them.

I think having such an easy recovery initially made it harder to appreciate how long the rest would take. I felt fine within days. Months later, I was still looking at little areas of swelling and waiting for one side to catch up with the other. Nothing that stopped me from loving my nose, but when it's your own face, you notice.

Even compared to a few months ago, I can see a difference. I'm so happy with how it looks now, but getting here has required more patience than I expected. I spent years researching this surgery, and I still underestimated that part. A year of healing really does mean a year. Dr. Kolker gave me everything I wanted and more, and that leads me to my biggest takeaway: who you choose for your surgery with matters. If you and your surgeon don't share the same vision, they're not the right fit for you. Revision surgeries are *extremely* common with rhinoplasties, so do yourself a favor and really do your research. When you do, however, you might wind up looking even better than you expected.

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### Meet the Expert

**Adam Kolker, MD FACS**

Board-certified plastic surgeon

Dr. Adam R. Kolker is a double board-certified plastic surgeon in Manhattan, NYC, specializing in cosmetic surgery of the breast, body, and face. Dr. Kolker is board certified by both the American Board of Plastic Surgery and the American Board of Surgery.