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## **BRACHYCEPHALIC DOGS AND BREATHING**

*Dr. Kathryn Junkins Sarpong*

*Pugs, French Bulldogs, Bulldogs, Boston Terriers, Pekingese*

Brachycephalic dogs are breeds that have small flat noses and often lots of wrinkles on their faces. Examples include Pugs, French Bull Dogs, English Bulldogs, Boston Terriers, and Pekingese. These dogs have unique breathing issues in their genetic lines. Many have been bred to have very short noses – adorable; but problematic for good air intake. If a Frenchie or bulldog cannot breathe well, it causes problems like snoring, heat exhaustion, fainting, and can result in major airway disease. These problems are best reversed early in a dog's life.

How do you know if your puppy has a problem?

If your young puppy snores, they may need airway surgery to have the best long life. Snoring in a young puppy can indicate they are already struggling with an airway that is constricted. Many dogs with air intake problems make a lot of noises when breathing or when excited. Some of these dogs will not lie on their backs because it makes it harder for them to breathe. Some have nostril slits that are closed and cannot breathe out of their noses at all.

What can we do?

I consider surgery for the moderate to advanced brachycephalic (short nosed) dogs. In surgery, we usually open the nostrils for more air intake and trim any excess tissue inside the mouth on the soft palate. The upper airway is evaluated for what we can change and what we cannot. Many dogs breathe better within a few days of surgery, and some clients tell me their dog starts to sleep on their backs for the first time ever after they have surgery.

I recommend keeping these dogs at ideal body weights. Being a little heavy and having this nose structure makes them VERY sensitive to heat stroke and potential death. Sometimes, these dogs get excited and cannot get enough air so they faint. Some need oxygen at the emergency room to recover. Prevention is best!

I recommend harnesses for these dogs for walks and limit any pressures on their necks. They do not need any more constriction in that area. Never use a choke chain on these dogs.

Keep them OUT OF THE HEAT! They cannot exercise when it is a warm, or you may need emergency veterinary care for them.

Lastly, Take them to your veterinarian for evaluation of their breathing pathway. Consider airway surgery when you have them spayed or neutered. It is better to do early in life rather than after they have had years of potential changes in their airways. 