



Brachycephalic Airway Syndrome is a combination of one or more anatomical and functional abnormalities of the upper airway of brachycephalic breeds. Brachycephalic breeds are those dogs with very short muzzles and flat faces (Pugs, French bulldogs, English bulldogs). Brachycephalic Syndrome is comprised of usually three main anatomical abnormalities: an elongated soft palate (the fleshy portion at the back of the mouth is too long and covers the airway), laryngeal sacculles (extra tissue in the throat that gets pulled into the airway), and stenotic nares (narrow nostrils).

What are the signs of brachycephalic syndrome?

Brachycephalic dogs may exhibit signs of brachycephalic syndrome. These signs include noisy breathing, excessive panting, snoring, and inability to exercise a normal amount. In extreme cases, dogs may overheat or become very weak because they cannot take in adequate oxygen.

How is brachycephalic syndrome diagnosed?

Often this syndrome is suspected based on breed and the noise the pet is making when it breathes, as well as how difficult it is for the pet to breathe. An upper airway exam is performed under sedation to evaluate for a long soft palate or for laryngeal sacculles; both of which may block the airway. The nares (nostrils) can be evaluated with the pet awake.



Pugs are among the breeds most often affected by brachycephalic syndrome.

How is brachycephalic syndrome treated?

Surgical modification of the nose and throat helps many of these dogs breath better. This surgery may involve opening the nares (nostrils), shortening the soft palate, or removing laryngeal sacculles (excess tissue). Typically these procedures are all done at one time and the surgery is performed right after a diagnostic upper airway exam.

What care is required after surgery?

Appropriate recovery from this surgery requires rest and avoidance of excitement for 1-2 weeks. By having the patient rest, we decrease panting which minimizes irritation of the breathing passages and allows surgical incisions to heal. These patients usually spend the night of surgery in our clinic for observation and to make sure there is no postoperative swelling.

What is the prognosis for my dog after surgery?

Once fully recovered from surgery, these dogs breathe more easily and are able to exercise more. Because of their unique anatomy, these patients will never breathe completely quietly and should not overexert themselves, particularly in warmer weather. It is difficult for these patients to cool themselves because of their airway issues, so they are at a higher risk of heat stroke.