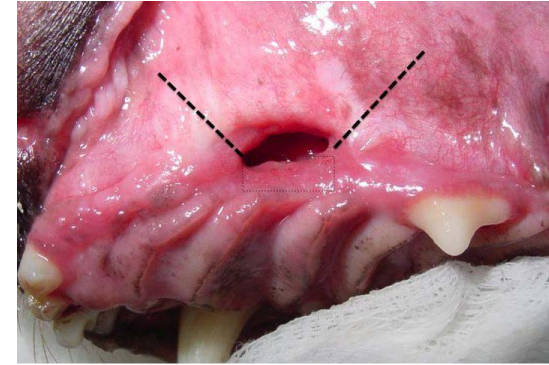




# Client Education Series: Oronasal Fistula



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# What is an oronasal fistula?

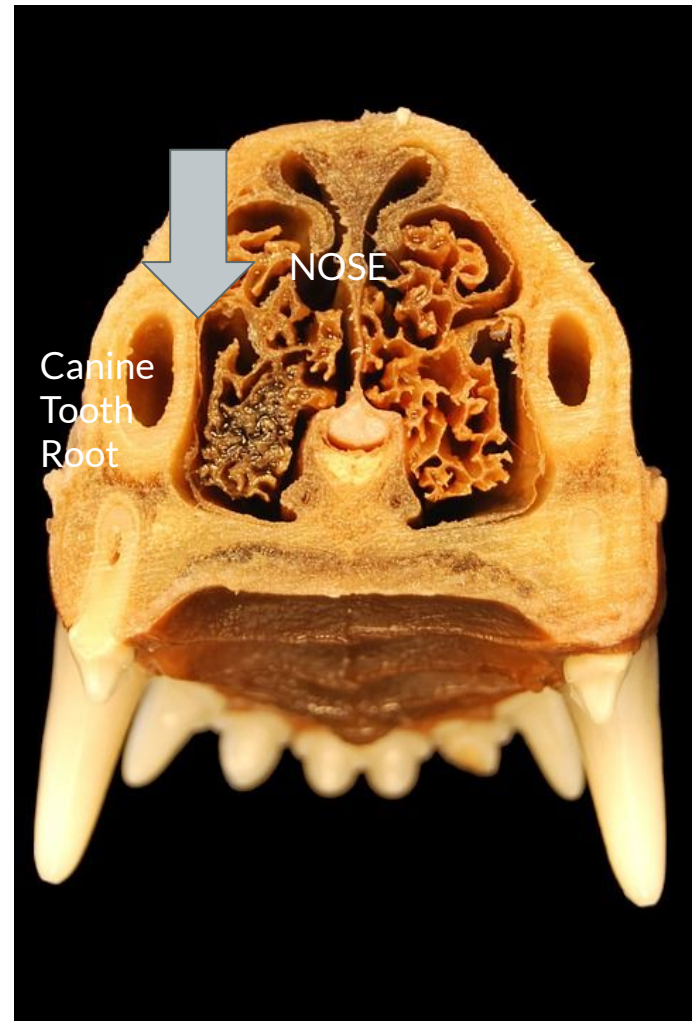
An oronasal fistula is a hole that is present between the mouth and the nose.

Oro = mouth

Nasal = nose

Fistula = hole or abnormal passage between a tubular organ and body passage or between two hollow or tubular organs

The cross-section to the right shows there is very little bone separating the canine tooth root and the nasal cavity (gray arrow)



## What causes an oronasal fistula?

The most common cause of an oronasal fistula is very severe dental disease causing infection with destruction of the bone between the tooth and the nose.

Tumors (cancer) can also cause oronasal fistulas, as can trauma of various types.



## Signs of an oronasal fistula

Classic presentation of an oronasal fistula caused by dental disease is sneezing, green or yellow nasal discharge (sometimes with blood) from the side of the nose with the diseased tooth (often only 1 side), and evidence of dental disease on oral exam.

Sometimes dental disease is hidden under the gumline, and fistulas are only found after dental x-rays and probing along the diseased tooth.

Fistulas can happen in cats and dogs of any breed, but dachshunds are the most common due to their large canine teeth and very narrow noses.





# How are oronasal fistulas treated?

For an oronasal fistula caused by severe dental disease, the tooth (or teeth) need to be extracted and a large flap needs to be created using the surrounding gingival (gum) and mucosal (inner lip) tissues to close the hole.

Sometimes, a bone membrane (from a laboratory in Kent Washington - not taken from the patient) needs to be placed over the hole to support the tissue flap.

If the fistula is caused by cancer, the tumor would need to be worked up and evaluated by an oncologist or surgeon to see what options are available. For trauma, the patient is first stabilized and the fistula is surgically repaired after evaluating any other wounds or concerns.



# Care after surgery for oronasal fistulas

Great care must be taken after surgery to protect the large flap that was made to close the fistula so that it can heal for 4-8 weeks after surgery.

\*An e-collar will be used so your pet cannot rub their face or paw at the surgery site and traumatize the stitches

\*No lifting of the lip/s to put tension on the surgery site

\*No hard chewing - soften food and remove toys

\*All medications should be given as directed to help control infection, pain, and swelling

\*Dental home care in the form of a water or food additive is helpful during this time because there is no stress

\*Although this can be frustrating, we do not want your pet to have to go back under anesthesia in an additional attempt to surgically repair the site

