



## What is it?

Oral tumors are usually locally aggressive, malignant tumors that affect both dogs and cats. The most common tumor originating in the mouth cavity are malignant melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma, fibrosarcoma and acanthomatous ameloblastoma. The most common oral tumors in cats are squamous cell carcinoma and fibrosarcoma. Several other malignant oral tumors (tumors in the mouth) that occur less commonly are osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, lymphoma, plasma cell tumors and mast cell tumors, among others. Animals usually present to their veterinarian for a bulging eye, facial swelling, increased salivation, tooth loss, weight loss, bloody oral discharge, halitosis or bad breath or difficulty eating. Nasal tumors are slow to metastasize (spread) but when they do it is generally to local lymph nodes or to the lungs. These tumors may be slow to metastasize (spread) but when they do it is generally to local lymph nodes or to the lungs. They are locally invasive tumors that eat away at surrounding bone and tissue. The tumor type and severity are commonly diagnosed by skull radiographs (x-rays), endoscopy, CT and tumor biopsy.

## How is it treated?

Surgery is considered the most common treatment used and may be curative for tumors that are confined to the oral cavity. Most oral tumors have some degree of underlying bone involvement and surgical resection should include aggressive treatment involving removing part of the jaw or even removing the eye and surrounding bone. These procedures are often well tolerated. Most animals return to near normal feeding after the initial surgery recovery. Cats may need an esophageal feeding tube following surgery. Radiation therapy may also be used as the only therapy or following surgery if the entire mass is not removed with clean margins. Chemotherapy is indicated if there is greater likelihood of spread.

## What is the prognosis for oral tumors?

As with any disease, prognosis is dependent on the severity of the disease and the treatment chosen. Most complete resections carry a favorable prognosis. Talk to your veterinarian regarding the best protocol for your animal companion.

## What symptoms can present as the disease progresses?

### *Early Stages:*

- Blood from the mouth
- Noisy breathing
- Increased salivation
- Exercise intolerance
- Facial swelling
- Decreased appetite
- Mild weight loss

### *Late Stages:*

- Persistent early stages
- Profuse bleeding from mouth
- Anemia
- Facial deformity and pain
- Open mouth breathing
- Continuous panting (dogs)
- Anorexia
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea – often black and tarry
- Vision loss
- Abnormal eye position
- Dull mentation

### *Crisis – Immediate veterinary assistance needed regardless of disease*

- Difficulty breathing
- Prolonged seizures
- Uncontrollable vomiting/diarrhea
- Sudden collapse
- Profuse bleeding – internal or external
- Crying/whining from pain\*

*\*It should be noted that most animals will instinctually hide their pain. Vocalization of any sort that is out of the ordinary for your pet may indicate that their pain and anxiety has become too much for them to bear. If your pet vocalizes due to pain or anxiety, please consult with your tending veterinarian immediately.*

## Common Signs of Pain

Panting, lameness, difficulty sleeping, pacing, abnormal posture, body tensing, poor grooming habits, tucked tail, dilated pupils, licking sore spot, muscle atrophy, decreased appetite, vocalizing/yowling, reclusive behavior, aggressive behavior, avoiding stairs/jumping, depressed, unable to stand.