

HOW ACUPRESSURE HELPS BRACHYCEPHALIC DOGS BREATHE EASIER

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Flat-faced dogs like pugs and Boston terriers are undeniably cute — but their short noses mean they're prone to respiratory problems. This acupressure session can help your brachycephalic companion breathe better.



If you share your life with a brachycephalic dog, then you're aware that these flat-faced, short-nosed breeds are susceptible to breathing problems that can be uncomfortable at best, and life-threatening at worst. Aside from avoiding strenuous exercise, managing stress, and keeping your brachycephalic dog indoors during hot, humid weather, you can also use a simple at-home acupressure session to help improve his breathing.

UNDERSTANDING BRACHYCEPHALY

"Brachycephalic" is the technical term for flat-faced dog breeds, of which there are 40. We often associate it with small breeds such as pugs, Boston terriers, Shih tzus, and Pekingese, but dogs of all sizes can be affected, including large breeds like the bull mastiff, bulldog, Cane Corso and others.

DID YOU KNOW?

"Brachy" means short and "cephalic" means head.

We sometimes think of brachycephaly in dogs as being a more modern issue, but anthropologists have found remnants of brachycephalic canine skulls in the graves of royalty dating back to ancient Roman times. Pugs are among the ancient flat-faced breeds, originating in China around 400 BC.

During the Victorian era, it became fashionable to selectively breed dogs for aesthetics and novelty. This meant that some breeds' faces became flatter and their eyes more prominent

than ever before. The heads of small brachycephalic breeds became even shorter and more domed to enhance the wrinkles on the brow.

DID YOU KNOW?

Larger canines, such as English bulldogs, were bred for shorter snouts, thereby creating a stronger jaw for fighting and hunting.

The selective breeding of canines has gone on for centuries. The problem is that healthy attributes may be lost when dogs are bred for a specific trait, and this is what has happened to the brachycephalic breeds. When the anatomy of any animal is purposefully manipulated for looks, the odds are the dog's anatomical and functional health and well-being are compromised.

WHAT CAUSES THE BREATHING PROBLEMS?

Brachycephalic dogs live an average of 8.6 years, while their long-nosed counterparts live around 12.7 years. Shortening the snout and head means these dogs experience significant airway constriction, among a host of other health issues, due to the anatomical malformation of their faces and heads. If the sinuses and jaws are crammed into a tight space, breathing becomes more difficult and heat builds up in the dog's body.

DID YOU KNOW?

Flat-faced dogs tend to be exercise- and heat-intolerant.

Labored breathing can tax the animal's heart. Often, these dogs are born with anatomical abnormalities such as an elongated soft palate that blocks air passing into the trachea (windpipe); the trachea often has a smaller diameter, decreasing the air passages, and the small, narrow nostrils in these dogs further restrict air flow.

Brachycephalic dogs need more health support than long-nosed breeds, so it's important to work with a holistic or integrative veterinarian through the course of the dog's life. Surgical remedies exist for some breathing impediments, but one way you can help your dog breathe easier is by using acupressure.

ACUPRESSURE IMPROVES OXYGENATED BLOOD FLOW

Caring for a brachycephalic dog means ongoing breathing support. Acupressure can't change the animal's anatomy, but along with proper veterinary care, it can enhance the dog's

quality of breathing. It does this by supporting the function of breathing and the assimilation of oxygen into the dog's blood.

The acupressure points (acupoints) shown below are intended to help oxygenated blood circulate through the dog's body, nourishing all internal organs and tissues.

DID YOU KNOW?

Even with their health issues, brachycephalic dogs make loving, devoted companions.

The smaller flat-faced breeds have a zest for life, and sharing your life with them is a pleasure. The larger breeds are built for power and deep devotion to their special person or family. Providing your brachycephalic dog with the care and breathing support she needs — including the acupressure session outlined in this article — means she can stay as happy and healthy as possible.

ACUPOINTS FOR BRACHYCEPHALIC DOGS

1

Lung 9 (Lu 9) — To locate Lu 9, lift the dog's front paw at the carpus (wrist) and tuck your forefinger under it, just below the joint. If your dog is happy with you holding your finger on the point while his paw is up, do so for a slow count to 20. If he's not, extend his leg down while continuing to hold Lu 9, again for a slow count to 20, before moving on to the next acupoint. Repeat this process on the opposite paw.

2

Conception Vessel 17 (CV 17) — This acupoint is found on the ventral (lower) midline. Direct your hand under the dog's chest at the level of his elbow and feel for the midline on the chest. Place your forefinger on CV 17 and slowly count to 20, then move to the next acupoint.

3

Bladder 17 (Bl 17) — This point is located about an inch away from the spine on the back border of the seventh thoracic vertebra. To find Bl 17, find the flat spot on your dog's spine; go forward (toward the head) by four spinous processes (the points you feel sticking up on the spine); then drop off to the side of the spine. Hold that spot for a count of 20. Repeat, holding this acupoint on the opposite side of your dog.

