

Dr. Phil Zeltzman, DVM, DACVS, CVJ

Dr. Phil Zeltzman is a board-certified veterinary surgeon and author. His traveling practice takes him all over Eastern Pennsylvania and Western New Jersey. You can visit his website at www.DrPhilZeltzman.com, and follow him at www.facebook.com/DrZeltzman.

Dr. Phil Zeltzman is a traveling, board-certified surgeon in Allentown, PA. His website is www.DrPhilZeltzman.com. He is the co-author of "Walk a Hound, Lose a Pound" (www.amazon.com).

Kelly Serfas, a Certified Veterinary Technician in Bethlehem, PA, contributed to this article.

Many dog [breeds](#) are at risk for specific health conditions. If you own a purebred dog, or if you are considering acquiring one, it is important for you to understand what your dog might be at risk for. From experience, I'd say that only half of my clients are aware of the conditions that most commonly affect their [dogs](#). Here is a summary of 10 conditions that are common in 10 different canine breeds.

Labradors and ACL tears

[Labradors](#) are energetic and playful. They are also the most common breed to tear their [ACL \(anterior cruciate ligament\)](#). When this ligament tears, it causes limping and pain, and needs to be repaired with [surgery](#).

Golden Retrievers and cancer

[Golden Retrievers](#) are prone to multiple [cancers](#), including [tumors](#) of the spleen (for example hemangiosarcoma) or [lymph nodes \(lymphoma\)](#). Lymphoma typically responds very well to chemotherapy. Tumors of the spleen are treated by surgically removing the spleen, followed by chemo if possible. The risk of allowing a mass in the spleen to grow is that it can burst and cause massive internal bleeding.

Bulldogs and narrow nasal passages

Dogs with a flat face ([Bulldogs](#), [Pugs](#), [Boston Terriers](#), etc.) have a condition called [brachiocephalic syndrome](#). This is due to the shape of their heads. These [dogs](#) have an entirely differently

shaped skull than others and their inside structures are literally smooshed! This means their nasal passages are both thicker and narrower.

The familiar snore of these breeds, really, is not supposed to be a "cute characteristic of the breed," but a breeding flaw and a medical [condition](#) that can be important to fix. Try to imagine breathing through a straw, or a constant head cold that makes you breathe through one nostril or not through your nose at all. If your brachiocephalic breed is snoring loudly, you should talk with your [veterinarian](#).

Dalmatians and bladder stones

[Dalmatians](#) have a genetic deficiency that can lead to [bladder stones](#). If one or several stones travel out of the bladder and get stuck in the urethra, they prevent the dog from urinating. This is an [emergency situation](#) which requires bladder surgery. To prevent this risk, Dalmatians should only be fed a special [food](#).

Dachshunds and slipped discs

[Dachshunds](#) have a genetic predisposition for [slipped discs](#). Their risk is about 10 times higher than other dog breeds! A severe disc hernia can lead to paralysis. An MRI can be performed to confirm the problem. Treatment involves surgery followed by faithful physical therapy.

Great Danes and GDV

[Great Danes](#), in part because of their "deep chest," are at a high risk for a life-threatening condition called bloat or ["GDV" \(Gastric dilatation volvulus\)](#). The [stomach](#) becomes full of air and twists around itself. Affected Great Danes require [emergency](#) surgery to untwist the stomach and "tack" it in place to prevent a relapse. A smart way to prevent emergency surgery is to tack the stomach before the crisis occurs, ideally during puppyhood.

Boxers and mast cell tumors

[Boxers](#) have a common skin tumor called a [mast cell tumor](#). These tumors need to be surgically removed because they can be cancerous and spread to other organs. Mast cells are just normal cells that are loaded with chemicals. Mast cell tumors can release the chemicals which can, for example, cause stomach ulcers. It is important not to squeeze mast cell tumors because that will make them release the chemicals.

Cocker Spaniels and ear infections

Cocker Spaniels, because of the shape of their [ears](#), are susceptible to [ear infections](#). Some cockers battle repeated [infections](#) for years. Ear infections can be very painful, which can change the dog's demeanor. When the ear canal becomes a painful, puss-filled, smelly, swollen mess, surgery is required to fix the problem. Despite possible complications, a total ear canal ablation is typically a highly successful surgery.

Yorkshire Terriers and tracheal collapse

Yorkies can have [tracheal collapse](#), a condition where the wind pipe progressively shuts down. Over time, the poor dog suffocates. A classic sign of tracheal collapse is a type of cough called "goose honking." The most advanced treatment involves placing a stent inside of the wind pipe, preventing the need for open surgery.

Poodles and dislocated kneecaps

Poodles and other small breed dogs commonly have kneecaps that dislocate out of the groove at the bottom of the thigh bone. This process causes the dog pain, limping and [arthritis](#). The cartilage in the knee also wears off progressively. Surgery will keep the kneecap in the groove. It typically works very well as it slows down arthritis and stops the pain.

If you have or are considering any of these breeds, ask your veterinarian what you can do to prevent these conditions. Also keep in mind that other conditions may commonly affect other purebred breeds.

Questions to ask your veterinarian:

- What condition is my dog at risk for?
- What can I do to prevent the risk?
- What can I do to fix the problem?

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.