

# Oral mass

## **What to Expect When Your Pet Has an Oral Mass**

Oral health is a very important factor in a pet's quality of life and, the more we learn, the more it becomes obvious that oral health can affect overall health. You are making a wonderful commitment to your pet's oral care and we want you to know what to expect when you come to visit with us! Please be aware that each patient is different and the mouth is a difficult place to predict, however we will do our best to derive as close of a treatment plan as possible during our initial visit.

## **What is the mass?**

Oral masses can be anything from benign extra gum tissue to more scary oral cancers. Although sometimes the shape, size and location of oral masses can give us a hint of what kind of mass is present, benign and malignant oral masses can masquerade as each other and even look identical. We will discuss the different causes of oral masses and what our suspicions may be when you arrive for your diagnostic appointment.

Depending on the nature of the mass and previous tests performed, we may recommend further diagnostics to better characterize the growth. In other cases, we may recommend going directly to surgery.

## **What can be done to treat the mass?**

Once we know what type of growth it is, we can provide you with the treatment recommendations. Often treatment will involve some type of surgery. Depending on the origin of the cells and tissue involved, some masses can be simply removed. Some tumor types are known to project microscopic projections into the surrounding tissues. In these cases, we may recommend a wide or "radical" excision meaning we remove the mass with some of the normal neighboring tissue. It is important to know that although to us, removing part of our jaw may be devastating both emotionally and physically, we can learn a lesson from our

canine companions. These patients quickly adapt and return to their pre-surgical self within days to weeks and the changes in their physical appearance is surprisingly minimal in many cases. We will always submit the mass for microscopic (histopathologic) review to ensure we have the right diagnosis and confirm the mass was removed completely. Some more aggressive tumors may require chemotherapy or radiation for the best prognosis. And of course, in some cases, you may not want to pursue further treatment based on the tumor type and prognosis. In these instances we will develop a plan to ensure you and your pet are comfortable for as long as we have to enjoy them. We will work with you and your veterinarian throughout this process and cross each bridge as we get there.

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