

“Base narrow” Canine Teeth

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“Base narrow” or abnormal position of the lower canines (malocclusion) is where one or both of the lower canines are in the wrong position (displaced towards the tongue). The displaced tooth or teeth can lead to anything from indentations into the gum tissue up to severe ulceration and trauma to the roof of the mouth (hard palate). These displaced teeth can also lead to severe gum disease to the upper canine or incisor teeth. The trauma to the hard palate caused by these malpositioned lower canine teeth is **not only painful to the pet** (leading to head shyness or eating difficulties) **but also can lead to eventual communication or hole into the nasal cavity** (oronasal fistula) which may be difficult to treat.

“Base narrow” condition is a common malocclusion seen in many breeds of dogs, both in puppies and young dogs under one year of age. It can occasionally occur in cats. Certain breeds may be more predisposed to the condition, including Poodles and Poodle crosses (Cavoodle, Labradoodle etc.), as well as Labrador and Staffordshire bull terrier breeds. It is also can be common in long nosed (dolichocephalic) head type dogs, such as the Hungarian Vizsla or Weimaraner breeds.

Adverse dental interlock: This is where a base narrow condition exists in the young puppy. It is usually due to abnormal bite (malocclusion) and is considered to be of genetic origin. During growth and development in puppies, the lower jaw (mandible) and the upper jaw (maxilla) grow independently of each other. However, if the puppy has a class II malocclusion, the “locking” of the maxilla and the mandible by mainly the baby (deciduous) lower canine teeth can occur. This is termed *adverse dental interlock*. The careful extraction of these deciduous teeth **may** lessen or prevent the base narrow condition from developing when the canine teeth start to erupt between the 5th and 6th month of life (interceptive orthodontic treatment).

Interceptive orthodontic treatment *does not* stimulate growth of the jaws, but rather removes any interference to jaw growth, and allows the locked jaw to catch up in growth and reach its full genetic potential. Unfortunately, with an underlying genetic problem, the affected jaw (skeletal base) may still lead to “base narrow” condition when the permanent teeth start to erupt at around 5- 6 months of age, depending on the breed of dog.

Apart from a true skeletal base malocclusion, sometimes dental malocclusions can be caused by either retained deciduous or baby teeth or malpositioned teeth (i.e., upper third incisor tooth reducing the gap or space between it and the upper canine tooth). These retained baby teeth can also lead to “base narrow” condition.

There are several effective ways of treating, or managing base narrow canine teeth. The main aim of the management is to provide your beloved pet with a pain-free and comfortable bite, that allows your pet to eat normally without discomfort.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact your primary care veterinary practice, or contact us via email (see above).

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