

French bulldogs have higher risk of 20 common health disorders

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French Bulldogs have significantly higher odds of being diagnosed with 20 common disorders compared to other dog breeds, reports a study published in the journal *Canine Medicine and Genetics*. To reduce the

risks of breathing disorders associated with the typical shorter muzzle and flat head of French Bulldogs, the authors propose a shift to focus breeding towards more moderate characteristics.

Authors from the Royal Veterinary College (Hertfordshire, England) used records from veterinary practices across the UK from 2016 using the VetCompass database, including 2,781 French Bulldogs and 21,850 other [dog breeds](#).

Dan O'Neill and colleagues compared diagnoses for 43 specific disorders between French Bulldogs and other dog breeds. The authors observed that French bulldogs were at significantly greater risk than other dogs for narrowed nostrils (42.14 times greater risk), obstructive airways syndrome (30.89 times greater risk), ear discharge (14.40 times greater risk), and skin dermatitis (11.18 times greater risk).

Of the French Bulldogs included in the study, the authors found that 1,764 (63.4%) were diagnosed with one or more disorder compared to 14,442 (66.1%) of other dog breeds. This suggests that French Bulldogs may have slightly lower odds of being diagnosed with a disorder in general but could also indicate owners are better at identifying [health concerns](#) in other dog breeds.

Despite having a higher risk of developing 20 common disorders, French Bulldogs had lower odds of being diagnosed with 11 out of the 43 common disorders compared to other dogs, including undesirable behavior, lameness and obesity. This highlights that the [breed](#) has the potential to move towards a healthier profile. The authors suggest that selectively breeding away from the extreme high-risk physical features of French Bulldogs, such as shorter muzzles and skin folds, that are associated with [health disorders](#) could improve the overall health of the breed.

Dan O'Neill, Senior lecturer at the Royal Veterinary College and co-author, said: "Achieving meaningful changes to the typical look of French Bulldogs over time requires buy in from breeders and kennel clubs who publish breeding standards, but the biggest responsibility lies with owners who ultimately can demand dogs with more moderate features.

"The Kennel Club have recently updated the breed standard for the French Bulldog to move further away from elements of extreme conformation with evidence of health ill-effects. This is a very positive step to prioritize the health of dogs over human desires for how these dogs look and we must now continue this evolution of the breed towards a more moderate conformation."

The authors caution that their results are reliant on reports from veterinary practices and may not indicate how long each individual dog suffers with a disorder, or its severity. They also caution that owners may not recognize that snoring in French Bulldogs could be indicative of a breathing disorder and may not take their dog to the vets.

The authors conclude that kennel clubs, breeders and the general public need to work together to encourage the breeding and purchasing of French Bulldogs with less extreme features associated with poor health.

More information: Dan O'Neill, French Bulldogs differ to other dogs in the UK in propensity for many common disorders: a VetCompass study, *Canine Medicine and Genetics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1186/s40575-021-00112-3](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40575-021-00112-3). [www.biomedcentral.com/articles .../s40575-021-00112-3](https://www.biomedcentral.com/articles.../s40575-021-00112-3)

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