— BESTFRENCHBULLDOG.COM • FREE CHECKLIST

# The Frenchie Anesthesia Safety Checklist



best french bulldog

Bring it to the pre-op visit, write in the answers and keep it close for the first night home.



**The honest picture:** anesthesia is very safe for most healthy dogs (about 1 in 1,850 healthy dogs died in a large UK study). Flat-faced dogs had about four times the odds of a complication in recovery (Brodbelt et al., 2008; Gruenheid et al., 2018). Most of the extra care is something you can ask for.

## Procedure details

| Dog's name and weight | Procedure and date | Drop-off and pick-up times |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| **Clinic and vet** | **Clinic phone** | **After-hours or emergency clinic phone** |
| | | |

## 10 questions to ask your clinic

A good clinic will welcome them.

| # | ASK | THEIR ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Do you anesthetize many flat-faced dogs, and do you adjust your plan for them?** Research — More complications, especially in recovery | |
| 2 | **Who will watch my dog the whole time?** Guideline — The 2025 standards call for a dedicated person | |
| 3 | **Do you use pulse oximetry, capnography, blood pressure and ECG?** Guideline — The 2025 minimum monitors for every dog | |
| 4 | **How will you keep my dog warm, during and after?** Guideline — Small dogs lose heat fast | |
| 5 | **Will you pre-oxygenate?** Guideline — Buys time if the breathing tube is tricky to place | |
| 6 | **What's your anti-reflux plan, and should I give anything the night before?** Mixed research — Many Frenchies regurgitate | |
| 7 | **How long should my dog fast, and could a small early meal help?** Guideline — Guidelines now favor shorter fasts | |
| 8 | **Will the tube stay in until my dog is fully awake, and who watches after it comes out? Overnight after airway surgery?** Specialist advice — Recovery is the highest-risk time for flat-faced dogs | |
| 9 | **Which of my dog's medications and supplements should I give or pause?** Guideline — Some drugs are held; some supplements affect clotting | |
| 10 | **Could X-rays or another small procedure be done in the same anesthetic, and would that add too much time?** Mixed research — One anesthetic is a plus, but extra time adds risk | |

If a clinic brushes off these questions, that tells you something. For older, sick or severe-BOAS Frenchies, your vet can bring in a board-certified anesthesiologist (AAHA, 2019). An integrative vet can review supplements before surgery and gut support after. Find vets in our veterinarian directory.


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— PREPARE, THEN PROTECT

# Before, Day Of and the First 24 Hours

Get the plan in writing, keep your Frenchie calm and cool and stay close that first night.



## Before

**UP TO THE DAY BEFORE**

- [ ] Book a **hands-on exam** and ask about bloodwork
- [ ] Tell your vet about any **snoring, gagging, vomiting or regurgitation**
- [ ] Share past anesthetics and any BOAS grade or airway surgery
- [ ] Fill in the medication and supplement list below
- [ ] Ask about calming medication if your dog gets anxious
- [ ] Keep vaccines off the surgery day
- [ ] Confirm the **fasting time**, whether water is allowed and whether a small early meal makes sense
- [ ] Ask which medications to give or hold, and whether to start an acid reducer the evening before
- [ ] Look at your dog's gums so you know what normal looks like
- [ ] Quiet, cool day: no hard play or long walks in the heat

## Day of

**MORNING AND PICK-UP**

- [ ] Follow the **fasting instructions** exactly
- [ ] Give only the medications your vet approved, in a spoonful of wet food if they said that's fine
- [ ] Skip exercise
- [ ] **Cool the car** before your Frenchie gets in
- [ ] Use a harness, not a collar
- [ ] Keep your phone on so the clinic can reach you
- [ ] At pick-up, ask how it went and fill in the notes on page 3
- [ ] Get an **after-hours number**
- [ ] Your Frenchie should be warm, alert, walking and comfortable before going home
- [ ] After airway surgery, plan on an overnight stay

## First 24 hours

**CLOSE, COOL AND QUIET**

- [ ] Keep your Frenchie near you in a **cool, calm room**, away from other pets and stairs
- [ ] **Don't leave your dog home alone tonight**
- [ ] Check **breathing and gum color** often
- [ ] Some grogginess is normal, but your dog should wake easily
- [ ] Offer food only as your vet advised
- [ ] Follow activity and wound-care instructions
- [ ] Lower appetite and energy for 12—24 hours, or a slight cough for a day or two, can be normal
- [ ] Not eating or acting normally within 24 hours? **Call your vet**
- [ ] Know the red flags on page 3

## Medications and supplements to share with your vet

List every medication, supplement, herb, oil and CBD product. Then ask which to give and which to pause, especially anything that can affect clotting (Woodley, 2026). Don't stop or start anything on your own.

| NAME | DOSE AND HOW OFTEN | LAST GIVEN | GIVE | HOLD | VET'S INSTRUCTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Example: fish oil* | *1 pump with breakfast* | *Mon 8 a.m.* | ☐ | ☐ | *Ask: affects clotting?* |
| | | | ☐ | ☐ | |
| | | | ☐ | ☐ | |
| | | | ☐ | ☐ | |
| | | | ☐ | ☐ | |
| | | | ☐ | ☐ | |
| | | | ☐ | ☐ | |
| | | | ☐ | ☐ | |

**What the guidelines say:** most medications continue as usual, and behavior medications, pain medications and steroids shouldn't be stopped suddenly. ACE inhibitor heart medications are usually held on the day, blood thinners may need to stop about two weeks ahead and a fasting diabetic dog shouldn't get a full insulin dose (AAHA, 2020).


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— THE FIRST NIGHT HOME

# Recovery Red Flags and Pick-Up Notes

Most of the extra risk for flat-faced dogs comes after anesthesia. When in doubt, call.



## After-surgery decoder

For the first 24—48 hours at home.

| LEVEL | WHAT YOU SEE | WHAT TO DO |
|---|---|---|
| Can be normal | Sleepy but wakes easily, a little wobbly, eating less than usual | **Can be normal for 12—24 hours. Keep your dog close, cool and quiet.** |
| Can be normal | A slight, dry cough | **Common for 1—2 days after a breathing tube. Watch that it doesn't get worse.** |
| Call today | Not eating or still very low energy after 24 hours, or a change in behavior | **Call your vet today.** |
| Call now | Vomiting, regurgitation or bringing up foam or food | **Call your vet now. Regurgitation raises the risk of aspiration pneumonia.** |
| Call now | A moist, worsening or productive cough | **Call your vet now.** |
| Call now | Black, tarry stools or repeated vomiting while on pain medication | **Call your vet now, before giving the next dose.** |
| Emergency | Struggling to breathe, or breathing much harder or noisier than usual | **Call your vet or an emergency clinic now and go straight in.** |
| Emergency | Pale, white, blue or gray gums, collapse or can't be woken easily | **Call your vet or an emergency clinic now and go straight in.** |

**Call now** Hard breathing, pale or blue gums, collapse or can't wake easily? Call your vet or an emergency clinic now.

## The recovery clock

Counted from when the breathing tube comes out.

**First 3 h**
The highest-risk period after anesthesia

**First 12 h**
Specialists advise flat-faced dogs aren't left unattended

**12—24 h**
Sleepiness and a smaller appetite can be normal

**24 h**
Appetite and energy should be back; if not, call your vet

In a US study of 1.8 million procedures, 60% of dog anesthetic deaths happened after the dog went home (Matthews et al., 2017). After airway surgery, monitoring for at least 24 hours is recommended (Lindsay et al., 2020).

## Pick-up and discharge notes

**Before you leave, is your Frenchie:** ☐ Warm ☐ Alert ☐ Walking (unless the procedure prevents it) ☐ Free of nausea and pain

How did it go? Any complications?

Any regurgitation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What to feed tonight, and when

Medications tonight (name, dose, time)

Activity limits

Wound care

What's normal tonight

Recheck or stitch-removal date

After-hours number

**Read the full guide:** French Bulldog Anesthesia Safety at BestFrenchBulldog.com. **Sources:** Brodbelt et al., *Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia*, 2008; Gruenheid et al., *JAVMA*, 2018; Matthews et al., *JAVMA*, 2017; Bailey et al., *Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia*, 2025, ACVAA monitoring guidelines; AAHA Anesthesia and Monitoring Guidelines, 2020; AAHA Dental Care Guidelines, 2019; Fawcett et al., *Animals*, 2019; McNally et al., *American Journal of Veterinary Research*, 2009; Costa et al., *JAVMA*, 2020; Doyle et al., *JAVMA*, 2020; Lindsay et al., *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 2020; Dr. Katie Woodley, The Natural Pet Doctor, 2026; Dr. Judy Morgan, Naturally Healthy Pets, 2023. This checklist is educational and doesn't replace advice from your own vet.


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