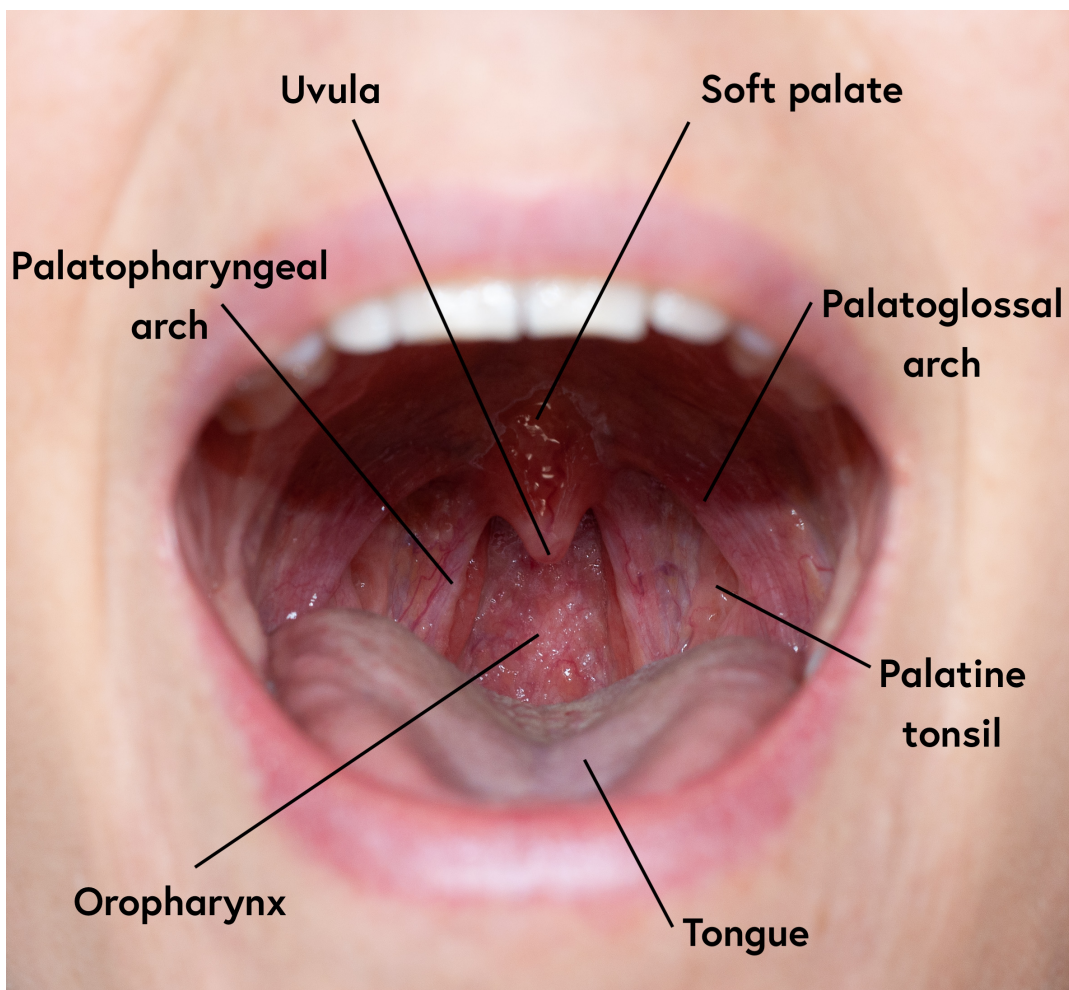


The Mouth and Pharynx

The Mouth

The **mouth** provides another entrance to the airway. The upper portion of the oral cavity comprises of the hard palate and soft palate, whilst the lower portion is dominated by the tongue. The tongue is a muscular structure used for digestion and phonation.

Negotiating the airway can be challenging when the tongue is enlarged. The tongue may be enlarged in congenital conditions such as Down's syndrome, or swell during an allergic reaction.



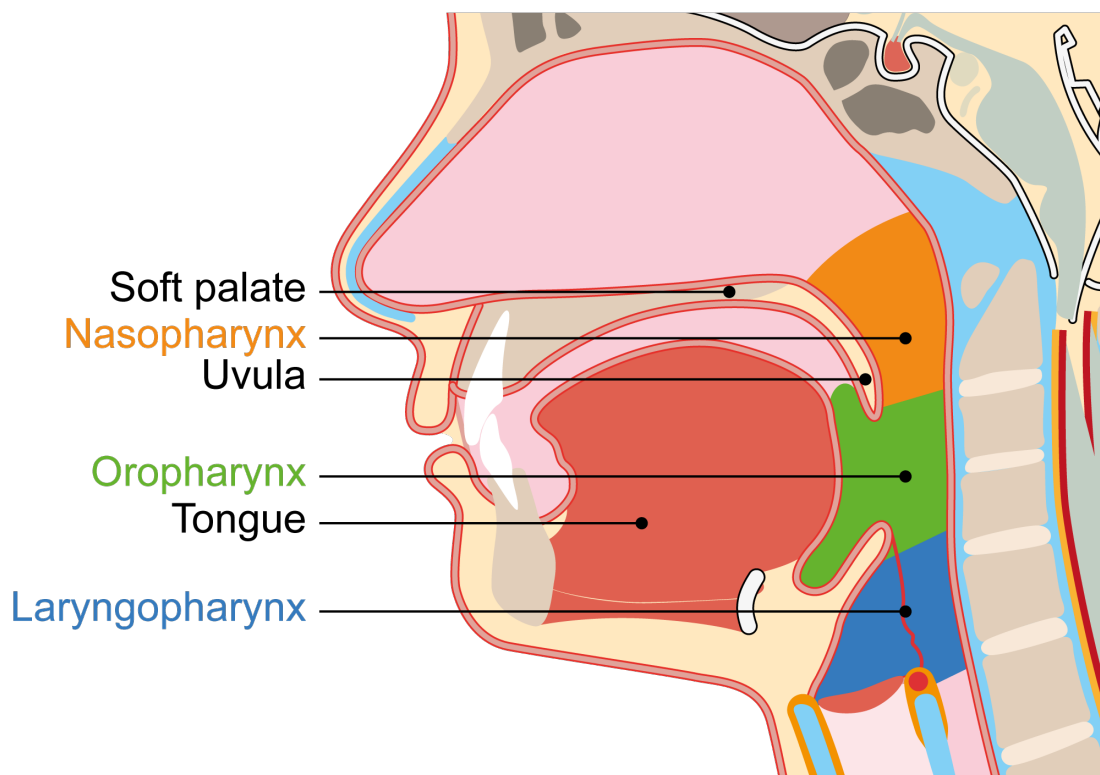
The Pharynx

The pharynx is the cavity which connects the nose and the mouth to the larynx and the esophagus. It is divided into 3 sections, the **nasopharynx**, **oropharynx** and **laryngopharynx**.

The **nasopharynx** runs from the back of the nasal cavity down the posterior aspect of the soft palate.

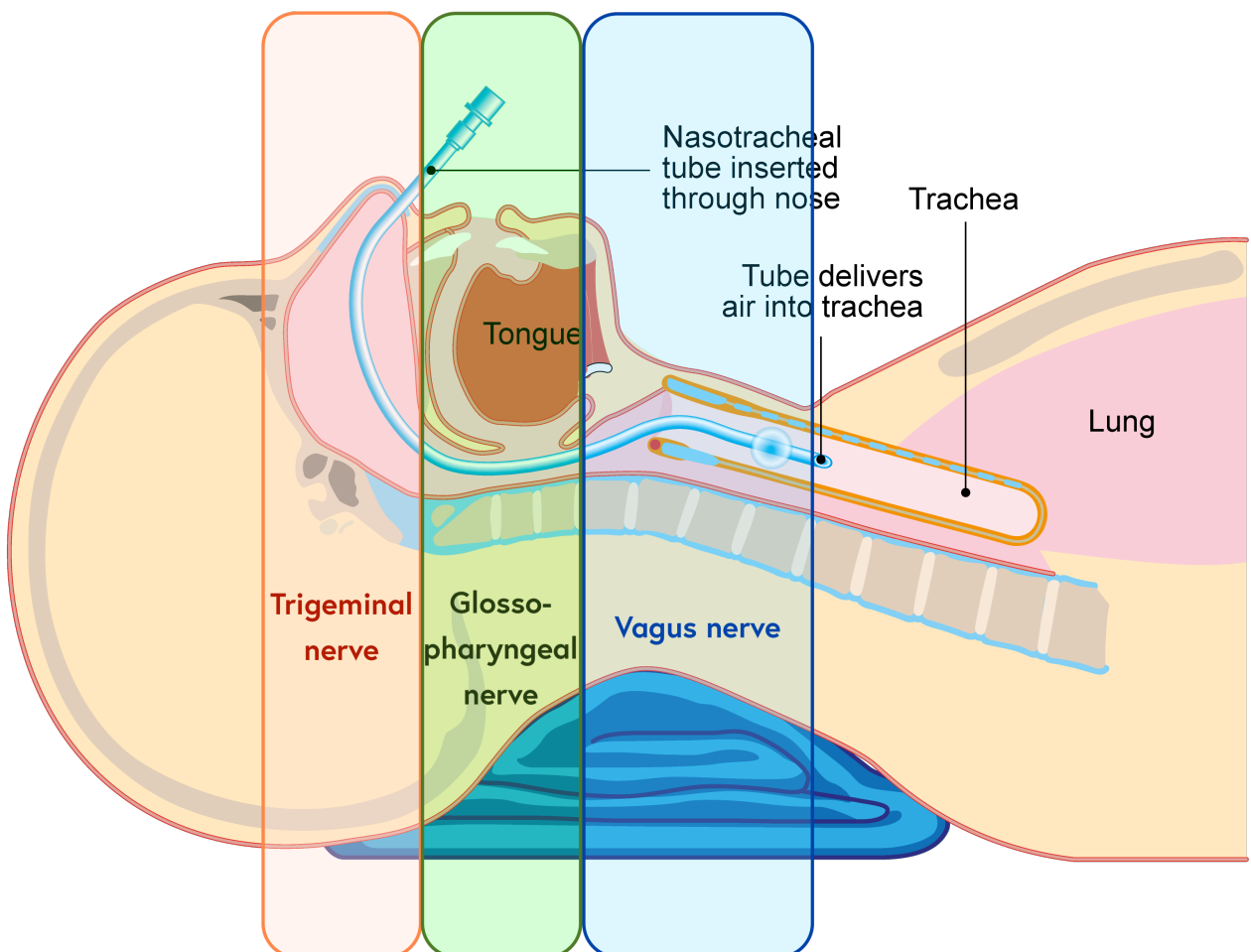
The **oropharynx** runs from the uvula (a finger like projection at the posterior aspect of the soft palate) to the epiglottis. The oropharynx contains anteriorly the palatoglossal arch, and posteriorly the palatopharyngeal arch. Between the two arches lie the tonsils. Just above the epiglottis is a fold called the vallecula. This where the blade of the laryngoscope is placed during laryngoscopy.

The **laryngopharynx** runs from the epiglottis to the cricoid cartilage, and contains the vocal cords.



Nerve supply of the pharynx

Broadly speaking the nose and nasopharynx are supplied by the **trigeminal nerve**, the oropharynx is supplied by the **glossopharyngeal nerve** and the laryngopharynx is supplied by the **vagus nerve**.



The Teeth

Teeth arise from the top and bottom jaw and provide structural support to facial architecture. Their main role is in mastication and digestion but they also influence facial aesthetics and facilitate speech. During direct laryngoscopy, rigid bronchoscopy, biting during emergence or even vigorous oropharyngeal suctioning there is a high risk of damaging teeth.

Dental damage is the leading cause of complaint and medicolegal claims against anaesthetists.

Each tooth consists of a crown covered in calcified enamel and dentine, and a root which is anchored into the jawbone. Within the root is the pulp containing vessels and nerves.