

## DENTAL HEALTH & YOUR PET

Pet's teeth need care too! Most pets have some evidence of periodontal disease by the age of 3 (70% of cats, 80% of dogs).

Periodontal disease is the most common dental problem in adult cats and dogs. Human dentists recommend twice daily teeth brushing and semiannual dental exams with cleaning. Our pets would greatly benefit from the same level of dental care. Preventative medicine is the best medicine!

### SIGNS OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE:

- \*Bad breath
- \*Red gums
- \*Tartar
- \*Gum recession
- \*Loose teeth
- \*Bleeding gums
- \*Dropping food
- \*Decreased appetite
- \*Decreased activity level
- \*Increase irritability

*TIP: Pet dental month is February.  
Look for specials during this time.*

How to brush your pet's teeth:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWP7zZKK4xw>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dBySVcgIYI>

### FUN FACTS:

Dogs have 42 teeth  
Cats have 30 teeth

Cats face additional dental health problems such as stomatitis (inflammation of mucus membranes of the mouth) and reabsorptive lesions.

### Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease is a disease that affects the teeth and their supporting structures. The disease is an inflammatory process that is completely preventable. Periodontal disease includes gingivitis (inflammation of the gums, often evident by being red), and periodontitis (inflammation of the tissue around teeth). Periodontal disease begins by bacteria sticking to the surface of the teeth and forming what is commonly known as plaque. Over time this plaque becomes hardened by minerals in the saliva to form calculus (tartar). While this tartar is not visually appealing it is not as problematic for our pets as the plaque and bacteria that accumulate below the gum lines. These cause damage to the tooth enamel, tooth roots, tooth ligaments, and gums. This damage leads to tooth mobility, gum recession, and worst of all pain for our pets. Pets are good at masking their pain, but anyone who has experienced dental issues can relate to the pain that our pets feel.

### Diet

A few diets have been specially formulated to help keep teeth clean. These are prescription kibble that maintains its form and allows the tooth to scrape along it. This scraping removes the built up plaque. In Canada, the occurrence of periodontal disease in pets is much lower due to the common use of these types of diets.



### Other dental problems

Changes in the structures around the teeth and accumulation of bacteria can also lead to tooth root abscesses.

Sometimes these are appreciated by owners as a swelling on the pet's face just in front of the eye. Another problem seen is when a communication between the mouth and the nasal passage develops secondary to periodontal disease. These communications can result in the pet coughing while drinking water or even aspiration pneumonia.

Fractured teeth, especially when pulp cavity is exposed are extremely painful and sensitive. These teeth require a root canal and crown or removal. Most commonly, we see canine teeth fractured or slab fractures of the large 4th premolars. If you notice that your pet has chipped or fractured a tooth bring it in for evaluation by your vet. Bacteremia (accumulation of bacteria in the blood) can occur from bacteria building up within a pet's mouth. This bacteria can shed to other important areas of the body and affect organ function.

### At Home Care

There are many different options for at home dental care. The very best prevention for dental disease is with daily brushing. Pets can be trained to accept daily tooth brushing. Do not use human tooth paste as it can be toxic to pets. Enzymatic tooth paste specially formulated for pets is the best, and it comes in great flavors that pets enjoy. If brushing is too stressful for your pet or if it is too difficult to fit into your routine there are other helpful things you can do at home to be proactive about your pet's dental health.

We recommend other home dental care products that have been approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council. These products will have a white square box that says "VOHC". Some of these products include water additives, daily chews, and special foods. Oral water additives and daily chews are a great, easy, and convenient way to supplement your pet's dental hygiene routine.

### Dental Procedures

Dental procedures are the best way to clean teeth and clean beneath the gum line. Our pets are unable to sit still with their mouths open wide so they have to be sedated to safely and effectively clean all their teeth. This also allows the veterinarian to perform a comprehensive oral health exam to determine if any teeth need to be removed. Regular dental cleanings and at home care can prevent teeth from needing to be removed. How often should a pet get a dental cleaning? This is determined by several different factors that are individual to the pet. Speak with your vet about how frequently your pet should come in for a cleaning.

Test your pet dental knowledge:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2511639/169767dabec4>

#### DENTAL DIETS:

Hill's t/d

Science Diet Oral Care

Royal Canine Dental

Purina Pro Plan DH

*Tip: Avoid hard bones and antler chews, these can lead to fractured teeth!*

#### HELPFUL LINKS:

<http://www.vohc.org>

<https://www.avdc.org/home>

<https://www.healthymouth.com>

<https://www.greenies.com>

<https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/Pet-Dental-Care>

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/donna-solomon-dvm/seven-dental-myths-for-pe\\_b\\_4819296](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/donna-solomon-dvm/seven-dental-myths-for-pe_b_4819296)