



## Dental Care

Dental care isn't just for people. Cats and dogs need dental care to keep their teeth and body healthy. You may notice bad breath but that's just the tip of the iceberg. Tartar forms on the teeth and allows bacteria to flourish. This bacteria can cause infected teeth, inflamed gums, and can even cause an infection that travels to the heart and kidneys. Dental disease can also cause teeth to become loose and fall out. It hurts! Here's what you can do to keep your pet healthy.

### Home Care

The best way to keep teeth clean is brushing. Yes, this goes for your pets as well. Daily brushing is the best. When you first start brushing your pet's teeth, use a pet toothpaste and a pet toothbrush. A pet toothpaste will be flavored and does not contain fluoride. There are a variety of pet toothbrushes available depending on your pet's mouth size and shape.



Get your pet used to the brush by starting with the front teeth and then work your way back. It's important to brush the back molars since this is where the most build-up of tartar occurs. Any pet, young or old, can learn to accept their teeth being brushed.

Brushing too difficult or time consuming? There are several dental diets available to help keep the tartar off the teeth. They are formulated to remove tartar as the cat or dog bites down on the morsel. In this way, it acts similar to brushing and tends to be easier to remember since all you have to do is feed them like normal.

Special dental chews given as a daily treat can also help break up the tartar on your pet's teeth. There are chews available that also have an antibacterial component similar to mouthwash that helps cut down on tartar.



Any product you choose should have the seal from the Veterinary Oral Health Council. This means the product has been proven to be effective in controlling tartar.

### Professional Cleaning



Even with at-home dental care, all pets will need their teeth professionally cleaned. How often they need cleaned varies depending on breed, genes, age, teeth positioning (such as crowding), and at-home dental care. An oral exam is part of the preventive care annual exam and the doctor will determine if your pet needs a dental cleaning at that time.

If your pet has early signs of dental disease, the doctor will recommend a dental cleaning to avoid more advanced stages of dental disease. Early signs of dental disease are gingivitis (red, puffy gums) and tartar (brown or tan buildup on teeth). You can notice bad breath.

More advanced signs of dental disease are calculus (very hard buildup of tartar which cannot be removed through brushing), severe gingivitis (with possible bleeding gums), loose teeth, and broken or damaged teeth.

In order to clean the teeth properly, your pet will need to be anesthetized. This allows for proper cleaning of the teeth both above and below the gum line. It also allows the teeth to be x-rayed for signs of hidden dental disease below the gum line. We offer digital x-rays because they are fast (your pet doesn't have to be anesthetized as long) and provide high quality images. X-rays help us determine if additional procedures are needed on your pet's teeth.

Prior to anesthesia, pets have blood tests performed to ensure that they are healthy enough for anesthesia. An IV catheter will be placed to allow for IV fluids to maintain blood pressure during the procedure. Additional monitoring is also performed and anesthesia is adjusted as needed. Your pet will go home the same day.

Frequent cleanings help keep down infection and keep teeth strong and healthy. Dental care at home can help prolong the time needed between professional dental cleanings.



Normal Appearance



Dental Tartar and early Periodontal Disease



Periodontal Disease with infection



Periodontal Disease with infection and Gingival Recession



Advanced Periodontal Disease with abscess formation