

Brushing Your Pet's Teeth

Dental disease is the most common problem seen in our pet population today. More than 85% of all dogs and cats presented to veterinarians are affected by dental problems. Periodontal disease is the number one dental problem in dogs and cats.

Equally important to annual dental exams is home dental care, such as brushing your pet's teeth at least three times per week. It is best to begin home care at an early age (8-12 weeks) during puppy or kittenhood, but it is never too late. What are the benefits? Brushing removes the daily accumulation of plaque from the teeth.

1. **Slowly Acquainting Your Pet With Mouth Care**

Using your hand, gently open the pet's mouth and run your finger around his or her lips, lifting the lips, etc. This should begin for just 30 seconds on day one and progressing to a couple of minutes by the end of the week. Reward your pet with a small treat at the end of each session

2. **Introduce your pet to brushing**

Wrap a gauze or washcloth around your finger and use it like a toothbrush on the pet's teeth. Wipe all the teeth, front and back, with strokes from the gumline to the tip of the tooth. Do this for one to two weeks until your pet is familiar with having its gums and teeth rubbed.

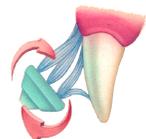


3. **Gradually progress to a soft toothbrush and plain water**

After a week of using a soft toothbrush, add a small amount of special dog or cat toothpaste. Never use human toothpaste as it may irritate the pet's stomach.

- ❖ The ideal dog toothbrush will have a long handle, an angled head and extra soft bristles. Another option is the finger toothbrush that fits over the tip of your finger.
- ❖ The best pet toothpastes contain enzymes that help control plaque. Try to avoid human toothpastes. They can contain baking soda, detergents, or salt, which can cause vomiting. Rather than placing the paste on top of the brush try to place it between the bristles. This allows the paste to spend the most time next to the teeth.
- ❖ Alternatively, if your pet will not accept a brush or paste, you may want to try our DentAcetic Wipes (similar to A Stridex pad) or DentAcetic Gel. These contain enzymes to help breakdown plaque and are a good alternative to traditional brushing.

4. **Begin by brushing the front teeth and then the upper and lower teeth in the back.** The bristles should be held at a 45-degree angle to the tooth surface and be moved in an oval motion. Scrub in the crevice where the gums meet the teeth, as this is where odor and infection begin.



•Always treat at the end of each session, making it enjoyable. Praise highly!

•If your pet shows any indication of aggression (growling, bearing teeth, biting, scratching, etc.) stop immediately. Call the hospital for further professional advice.

In summary, dog home care should include daily (or at least every other day) brushing. Taking an active role in the care of your pet's dental care will help reduce dental disease, bad breath and potential life threatening heart and kidney disease. Cleaning at home will also reduce the frequency of professional care needed. **Everyone wins!**