

# Dentistry for your Pet



All of us know about the benefits of routine dental care for ourselves. Daily brushing and flossing, and regular visits to the dentist, keep our teeth and gums healthy and comfortable. Unfortunately, routine dental care is still an often neglected item of dog and cat general health care. Your pets, as well as you, deserve regular dental care.

After your pet reaches a few years of age, tartar begins to build up at the junction of his gums and teeth. If this tartar is not removed, it increases until it undermines the tissue and causes receding gums. The area then becomes infected. Infection leads to foul breath, as well as pain and a constant unsavory taste for the pet. If the situation is not soon remedied, severe gum infections, abscessed teeth and cheek ulcers will develop.

Chronic infections of the teeth and gums result in problems elsewhere in the body as well. Bacteria enter the bloodstream from infected teeth and cause infection in organs such as the liver, the kidneys, the heart and the joints. Good dental care lengthens pets' lives an average of 10 - 20% through the prevention of these secondary problems.

Miniature and toy breeds of dogs exhibit dental problems more frequently and much earlier in life than do the larger breeds. Cats are especially prone to gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) and resorptive lesions, a type of cavity that occurs at the gum line and eventually destroys the tooth. As a result of mouth pain cats may stop eating and show weight loss and nutritional disturbances.

You can help prevent dental problems in your pets by feeding a tartar control pet food. Daily or at least twice weekly brushing of your dog or cat's teeth with a toothpaste made for pets will also help prevent tartar buildup. Milk bones, rawhide chew toys, and some specially designed rubber toys are all on the market to assist in this as well. Look for products that carry the VOHC seal logo which means it has been clinically proven to work. Some pet foods are formulated to reduce plaque and tartar - ask us for a recommendation.

Just as with people, your pets will still require regular dental exams, and cleaning or extractions as necessary. Under general anesthesia the teeth are cleaned with an ultrasonic dental scaler much like the one your own dentist uses, and then polished. Polishing smooths the surface of the teeth to help discourage future tartar formation. Your pet will also receive a sealant treatment to help reduce plaque build-up.

Other more advanced procedures such as root canal work, restorations and even braces are also available should your dog or cat ever need them. We encourage you to be concerned about your pet's oral health, and to keep in mind the availability of effective treatments for dental problems in your dog or cat. Make dentistry a part of your pet's total health care plan, for a longer and happier life.

Caring People Helping Pets

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