

Memorial-610 Hospital for Animals

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Prepared for Your Pet Animal

DENTAL HOME CARE

The American Veterinary Dental Society recommends a full dental cleaning every six months for your pet, just the same as your dentist recommends for you. Still, imagine what that cleaning procedure would be like for you if you did not brush your teeth at all between dental visits. Within hours of a professional cleaning, plaque and bacteria start to build up again on the teeth. Dental home care is the single most important aspect of regular dental care. Once your pet's teeth have been professionally cleaned, with proper home care, your pet may not need another dental prophylaxis for months or even years, thus saving you the expense and your pet the extra anesthetic.

WHAT KIND OF HOME CARE IS AVAILABLE?

The Toothbrush Kit

Just as with your own teeth, nothing beats brushing. The fibers of the toothbrush are able to reach between teeth and under gums to pick out tiny deposits of food. A toothbrush acts as a tiny scrub brush for the closest possible cleaning. Notice the shape of the canine and feline brushes and how they conform to a pet's mouth. You may use a human toothbrush, but you might probably find it difficult to manipulate in the pet's mouth. Finger brushes are available as are smaller brushes for puppies and kittens, or you could apply material to a tissue or cloth and rub on the teeth.

Toothpaste

DO NOT USE A HUMAN TOOTH PASTE ON YOUR PET. Toothpaste for people contains sudsing agents, which are not formulated to be swallowed. These will upset your pet's stomach, as your pet is not able to rinse out his or her mouth. Pet toothpaste comes in a variety of flavors: mint (which people tend to prefer as a scent but animals do not prefer as a flavor), chicken, liver, and malt (generally preferred as a flavor by pets).

Dental Rinses

Some pets will not allow any one to actually touch their teeth. For these pets there is a dental rinse or spray, which can be applied onto the teeth as an anti-plaque wash. As noted above, the rinse can be applied to a tissue or cloth and rubbed on the teeth as well.

Dental Treats

Some cats will not allow anyone to reach into their mouths for any reason and will not tolerate brushing, spraying, rinsing or any other home care. Although not as effective as tooth brushing, for these animals, dental treats represent an excellent method of dental home care. Feline dental treats are freeze-dried fish pieces specially treated with enzymatic dentifrice to help remove plaque. We recommend a treat daily for routine home care. For dogs, special compressed rawhide chews with enzymatic action are available which cannot unroll and cause obstruction in the GI tract.

HOW TO BRUSH

What would happen if you stopped brushing your own teeth? Even if you only ate hard food as most dogs do, there still would be problems. You should be brushing your pet's teeth at least twice weekly, daily if you can manage it. It's not as difficult as you might imagine.

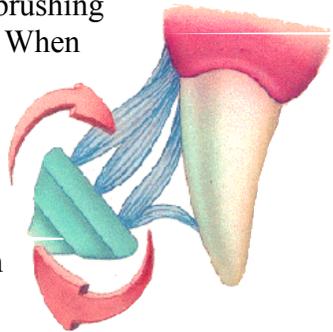
What are the benefits? Brushing removes the daily accumulation of plaque from the teeth. Even though dogs and cats do not commonly get cavities, they do suffer from periodontal disease. If untreated this disease can lead to pain and loss of teeth.

Step one: Pick an appropriate pet toothbrush. Save yourself time by not buying a child's toothbrush, which is usually too hard for dogs. The ideal dog toothbrush will have a long handle, an angled head to better fit the mouth and extra soft bristles. Another option is the finger toothbrush that fits over

the tip of your finger. For cats, specially designed brushes with small, rounded heads are ideal.

Step two: Select appropriate toothpaste. The best pet toothpastes contain enzymes that help control plaque, such as CET® brand. Avoid toothpastes with baking soda, detergents, or salt sometimes found in human pastes. Fluoride may be incorporated to help control bacteria. 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.

Step three: Most pets accept brushing if they are approached in a gentle manner. If you can start when they are young, it's quite easy, but even older pets will accept the process. Start slowly and make the experience as pleasant as possible by acting happy and excited. If you dread the experience, your pet will pick up on this. You can use a washcloth or piece of gauze to wipe the teeth, front and back in the same manner you will eventually be using the toothbrush. Do this twice daily for about two weeks and your dog or cat should be familiar with the approach. Then take the pet toothbrush, soak it in warm water and start brushing daily for several days. When your pet accepts this brushing, add the toothpaste.



Ideally, the toothbrush bristles should be placed at the gum margin where the teeth and gums meet at a 45 degree angle. The movement should be in an oval pattern. Be sure to gently force the bristle ends into the area around the base of the tooth as well as into the space between the teeth. Ten short back-and-forth motions should be completed, then the brush should be moved to a new location. Cover three to four teeth at a time. Most attention should be concentrated on the outside of the upper cheek teeth.

In summary, small animal home care should include daily (or at least every other day) brushing, using an enzymatic pet toothpaste. 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. Everyone wins.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF DENTAL HOME CARE

- DON'T USE A HUMAN TOOTHPASTE ON YOUR PET
- DO USE A TOOTHBRUSH WITHOUT ANY PASTE AT FIRST SO THAT YOUR PET MAY GET USED TO THE OBJECT IN THE MOUTH BEFORE HAVING TO CONTEND WITH FLAVOR
- DON'T ATTEMPT TO CLEAN THE INNER SURFACE OF YOUR PET'S TEETH. NATURAL SALIVA CLEANS THIS SURFACE WELL ON ITS OWN
- DO TRY TO PERFORM DENTAL HOME CARE AT LEAST ONCE DAILY
- DON'T PERFORM DENTAL HOME CARE DURING THE FIRST WEEK AFTER A FULL DENTISTRY IN THE HOSPITAL AS YOUR PET'S GUMS MAY BE TENDER
- DON'T LET YOUR DOG CHEW ON COW HOOVES AS THESE ARE TOO HARD AND TEETH MAY BREAK AGAINST THEM
- DON'T CONSIDER DENTAL HOME CARE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO FULL DENTAL CLEANING IF YOUR PET HAS MORE ADVANCED DENTAL DISEASE.

Adapted from "Dental Home Care" by Wendy C. Brooks, DVM, DABVP and "Brush My Dog's What?" by Jan Bellows, DVM

Printed for Your Pet Animal ((unassigned))