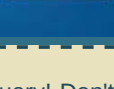


Most Dental Disease Occurs Below the Gumline, Where You Can't See it.



avma.org/petdental



**Save
\$75**

\$75 OFF every dental cleaning in February! Don't miss this opportunity to save big on professional dental care for your pets! Call and schedule your pet's dental cleaning today!

(Coupon not required)

Offer Expires: February 28, 2016

In This Issue

[Dental Care at Home](#)
[Signs of Dental Disease](#)
[Grading Dental Disease](#)

Quick Links

[Pet Dental Care - AVMA](#)
[American Veterinary Medical Association \(AVMA\)](#)
[American Veterinary Dental College](#)
[American Animal Hospital Association \(AAHA\)](#)

FAQ: I thought dogs and cats don't get cavities. Why is it so important to keep their teeth clean?

Although cavities are less common in pets than in people, they can have many of the same dental problems that people can develop:

- broken teeth and roots
- periodontal disease
- abscesses or infected teeth
- cysts or tumors in the mouth
- malocclusion, or misalignment of the teeth and bite
- broken (fractured) jaw
- palate defects (such as cleft palate)

Periodontal disease is the most common dental condition in dogs and cats - by the time your pet is 3 years old, he or she will very likely have some early evidence of periodontal disease, which will worsen as your pet grows older if effective preventive measures aren't taken. Early detection and treatment are critical, because advanced periodontal disease can cause severe problems and pain for your pet.

Periodontal disease doesn't just affect your pet's mouth. Other health problems found in association with periodontal disease include kidney, liver, and heart muscle changes. It starts with plaque that hardens into tartar. Tartar above the gumline can often easily be seen and removed, but plaque and tartar below the gumline is damaging and sets the stage for infection and damage to the jawbone and the tissues that connect the tooth to the jaw bone. Periodontal disease is graded on a scale of 0 (normal) to 4 (severe).

The treatment of periodontal disease involves a thorough dental cleaning and x-rays may be needed to determine the severity of the disease. Your veterinarian will make recommendations based on your pet's overall health and the health of your pet's teeth, and provide you with options to consider.

Provided by The American Veterinary Medical Association

Find out more about how your pet's dental health impacts his or her overall health by visiting:

<https://www.avma.org/Events/pethealth/Pages/February-is-National-Pet-Dental-Health-Month.aspx>

Taking Care of Your Pet's Teeth At Home

We don't visit our dentists once per year and never brush our teeth - our pets shouldn't either!

How should we take care of their teeth between cleanings?

Brushing and Toothpastes: Brushing your dog's teeth is the single most effective means to maintain oral health between professional dental examinations. This makes sense because the bacterial film known as "plaque" is the cause of periodontal disease. This film is easily disrupted by the simple mechanical effect of brushing the teeth. Frequent (ideally daily) brushing is recommended to maintain optimal dental health. Almost all dogs will eventually accept brushing. The key to success is to be patient and gradual in your approach, brushing mainly the outsides of the "cheek teeth" located under the upper lip. A dog that resists brushing frequently may have painful areas in the mouth that need to be addressed.

A variety of products safe for pets are available in the marketplace. If you use a brush, we recommend pet-specific toothpastes. These come in flavors that dogs accept, such as poultry and seafood. Avoid human toothpastes as they often contain fluoride, abrasives, and high-foaming detergents that should not be swallowed or inhaled by dogs.

Toothbrushes designed for dogs are soft and angled to assist in brushing the back teeth. Some dogs prefer finger brushes. A variety of "dental wipes" containing different products are available. The single-use wipes are rubbed daily on the outside of the teeth to remove plaque.

Oral Rinses and Gels: Chlorhexidine is the most effective anti-plaque antiseptic. Chlorhexidine binds to the oral tissues and tooth surfaces, and is gradually released into the oral cavity. It is safe for pets and rarely causes problems, though it does have a bitter taste if palatability enhancers suitable for dogs are not included. Some dogs may object to the taste of products containing chlorhexidine while others accept it with no difficulty. The rinse is applied by squirting a small amount inside the cheek on each side of the mouth. The gel is applied by smearing it onto the teeth. The tongue and lips will spread the rinse or gel around the mouth.

Diets and Chews: Several "dental diets" have been shown to be of benefit in decreasing dental disease. Some employ a specific kibble design and others include a chemical anti-tartar poly-phosphate ingredient. Our veterinarians love Hill's Science Diet dental formulas.

Chew treats can be helpful if chewed daily, and some rawhide chews and biscuits contain an anti-tartar ingredient. Palatability is important - chewing every day is ideal. However, you should always know how your pet handles rawhide chews before offering them, as they may pose a food hypersensitivity or choking hazard to some.

Dogs are hunters and scavengers - they chew on bones in the wild. However, we do not recommend cow hooves, dried natural bones or hard nylon products because they are too hard and do not mimic the effect of a dog tearing meat off a carcass. These hard products are associated with broken teeth or damaged gums.

Chew toys are only of benefit if they are played with frequently and over the long haul - you can increase the dog's willingness to chew by smearing palatable peanut butter or soft cheese on the product.

Pet dogs should be monitored while chewing a chew treat or toy, as they may swallow large pieces, leading to a variety of digestive system disorders.

The Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) Seal of Acceptance is awarded to home oral hygiene products that meet or exceed the VOHC standard for retarding accumulation of dental plaque or dental tartar. A complete listing of products that have been granted the VOHC Seal of Acceptance is available at www.vohc.org - click the Products Awarded the VOHC Seal link. The VOHC web site also features additional information about dental disease in pets, and there are other pages on the AVDC web site that may be helpful. Just visit www.vohc.org.

Provided by the American Veterinary Dental College

<http://www.avdc.org/carefordogs.html>

Thank you for your continued trust in our care of your pets and you!

*Sincerely,
The Doctors and Staff of The Pet Clinic*

February is National Pet Dental Health Month!

Greetings!

Since February is National Pet Dental Health Month, The Pet Clinic team is focusing on keeping you up-to-date on the importance of regular, routine dental care for your pets!

It takes your pet's whole healthcare team (you, as well as our doctors and staff here at The Pet Clinic) working together to make sure your pet is receiving optimal healthcare, and one of the most overlooked areas is his/her dental health. Our doctors and staff are trained to detect dental abnormalities when your pet receives his/her physical examination, but most dental disease occurs below the gumline, where we can't see it. For this reason, it's also important for you to be able to recognize subtle clues and abnormal behaviors at home that could indicate dental disease.

Be sure to explore this month's newsletter for important information on Signs of Dental Disease, FAQs about Pet Dental Care, At-Home Dental Care Tips, links to more detailed information on dental health from trusted veterinary sources, dental cleaning procedure videos, and more!

Come see us for a FREE dental screening for your pet! One of our trained technicians will be happy to evaluate your pet's dental health and help you schedule his/her next professional dental cleaning today!

Take advantage of our limited-time offer: \$75 OFF all dental cleanings this month!

Common Signs of Dental Disease

Not all dental disease is easily seen on physical exam.

But, your pet could be giving you clues at home:

- bad breath
- broken or loose teeth
- abnormal chewing
- drooling
- dropping food from the mouth
- reduced appetite or refusal to eat
- pain in or around the mouth
- bleeding from the mouth
- swelling in the areas surrounding the mouth



Grading Dental Disease

What are we looking for in your pet's mouth?

When we perform a dental/oral examination of your pet's teeth, we look for signs of dental disease. These include fractured teeth, worn areas of enamel due to chewing (called 'attrition'), retained deciduous ('baby') teeth, plaque, tartar, inflammation of the gums (gingivitis), abnormal growths or masses of the gums or mouth, tooth discoloration, infected teeth, and more. We then grade your pet's teeth using a dental grading system:

Grade 1 - There is no plaque or tartar, and no gingivitis. This is the ideal condition for your pet's dental health.

Grade 2 - There is plaque/tartar, but no gingivitis. This is the earliest stage of oral disease where tartar is beginning to develop without any additional oral disease present at this time. Mild Periodontal Disease may be present at this stage.

Grade 3 - Moderate oral disease is present with mild to heavy plaque/tartar, moderate gingivitis, possible tooth furcation visible (you can see the arches of the tooth roots), gum recession, and there may be noticeable tooth mobility. Mild to moderate Periodontal Disease is evident at this stage.

Grade 4 - Severe oral disease with moderate to severe plaque/tartar, severe gingivitis, tooth furcation and gum recession is usually visible, and tooth mobility noticeable. Periodontal Disease is marked at this stage.



Grade 4 Dental Disease

We recommend regular dental cleanings at least every 1-2 years, but some pets require more frequent cleanings. Here at the Pet Clinic, we always assess your pet's dental health with every Semi-Yearly and Yearly Exam so that we can let you know if your pet would benefit from more frequent cleanings. However, if you ever notice any signs of dental disease at home between visits, please call and schedule an appointment so that we may see them sooner.

FAQ: I worry about the risks of anesthesia. Is it really necessary for my pet to be under anesthesia for his/her dental cleaning?

Our pets are unable to comprehend a professional dental cleaning. If people are frightened by the sounds and the smells during a dental cleaning, imagine the feelings of a beloved pet. It is unreasonable to ask a cat or dog to have their teeth charted by probing and examining each tooth individually, cleaning above and below the gumline, and taking X-rays while asking them to hold their mouth open and hold still. Like human dentistry, water, suction, and polishing are involved when performing a dental cleaning on pets. Doing this to a dog or cat with a healthy mouth would be difficult. Imagine how difficult it would be if there were painful broken teeth, abscesses or tooth resorptions.

An awake oral exam will be performed on your pet by your veterinarian to design a preliminary diagnostic plan. It is not until your pet is anesthetized that a complete and thorough evaluation can be accomplished, including tooth-by-tooth visual exam, probing and possible radiographic exam to determine a more specific treatment plan.

All pets, old or young, need to be anesthetized for their teeth to be cleaned, charted, and X-rayed (if necessary) properly and safely. Because a professional dental cleaning requires plaque and tartar to be removed both above and below the gumline, your pet's dental health care team will need to have your pet's mouth open and unmoving to be able to perform the procedure safely and thoroughly. Without anesthesia, it is impossible to clean the inside surfaces of the teeth or under the gums where periodontal disease develops. Without the use of the correct instruments and procedures, such as polishing tooth surfaces, an environment will be created where plaque and tartar will develop more rapidly. "Removal of dental tartar on the visible surfaces of the teeth has little effect on a pet's health, and provides a false sense of accomplishment," says the American Veterinary Dental College (AVDC) in a position statement opposing anesthesia-free cleaning.



(Before Cleaning)

Grade 3-4 Dental Disease with moderate to severe plaque/tartar and mild to moderate gingivitis. This dog has retained deciduous ('baby') canine teeth which caused excess plaque to build up between them and the adult canine teeth.



(After Cleaning Under Anesthesia)

Deciduous canine teeth have been extracted to prevent further dental disease. All plaque and tartar has been removed above and below the gumline.

For safety and comfort, your pet will need to be under general anesthesia, where both an inhalant gas and oxygen are given anesthetized through a breathing tube. Our trained doctors and veterinary technicians will continuously monitor your pet while he or she is under anesthesia. A veterinary technician or assistant will monitor your pet from the time the anesthesia begins until your pet is fully awake and conscious of his or her surroundings.

Although there is always some risk when using an anesthetic, it is much safer than in the past; the risks are controlled thanks to new, safer anesthetic drugs, careful dosing and administration, and constant monitoring of pets during and after anesthesia. For your pet's safety, your veterinarian will run preanesthetic blood tests to be sure your pet's body systems are healthy enough to undergo anesthesia, and they will then tailor the anesthesia plan based on those results and other factors such as your pet's age, weight and overall health.

Provided by the American Animal Hospital Association

www.aaha.org