



Claws & Paws

VETERINARY HOSPITAL®

DENTISTRY

Why is the Doctor making such a big deal about my pet's teeth?

Dental disease is the most common, the most diagnosed, and the most often-recognized health problem we see.

As in people, plaque and tartar build up on the teeth in all animals. This plaque is formed by food particles and bacteria which, combined with salivary secretions, attach where the teeth rise above the gum line. If this plaque is allowed to accumulate unchecked, it eventually causes a variety of dental conditions that range from mild discomfort and bad breath, all the way to root abscesses, tooth loss and difficulty eating.

Eighty-five percent of all dogs and cats three years of age and older, have some degree of dental disease that requires treatment and/or preventative care. If left untreated, periodontal disease can lead to systemic disease, showering the lungs and other internal organs with bacteria. This can cause heart, liver, and kidney disease resulting in a shortened life for your pet.



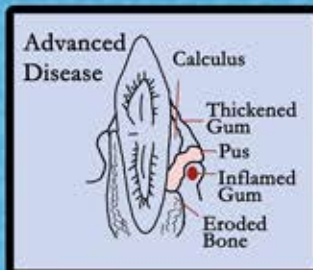
The majority of pet owners are unaware of the severity of their pet's dental problems and therefore do not view the teeth cleaning procedure as necessary. Pet dentistry should not be an elective procedure, but rather a required component of routine preventative care similar to physical examinations, vaccinations, intestinal parasite exams, heartworm testing and annual wellness blood work.



The leading sign of dental disease is bad breath (halitosis). Dogs and cats should not have disagreeable mouth odor -- this comes from infection.

Wouldn't I know if my pet's teeth were painful?

Most pet owners do not realize that there is a problem with their pet's teeth until the pet stops eating or when their pet gets a painful swelling under his eye. This swelling is due to an abscessed upper fourth premolar tooth. Dogs and cats will instinctively hide any signs of discomfort or illness as long as they can. Unlike people, who realize quite soon that they have an abscessed or infected tooth, dogs and cats will suffer low grade, chronic pain from a tooth root abscess for months to years before the problem becomes painful enough to be clinically obvious.



Do I have to take my pet elsewhere if there is a problem with his teeth?

Dental procedures are performed at Claws & Paws Veterinary Hospital® daily. Dental x-rays, ultrasonic scaling and polishing, fluoride treatment, antibiotic polymer treatment and periodontal surgery are some of the procedures we offer to our patients.

Does my pet really have to be sedated to have his teeth cleaned?

Anesthesia allows us to evaluate each tooth without your pet feeling any discomfort or pain. We use a safe anesthetic protocol, one gentle enough to allow your pet to recover and return home the same day the procedure is performed.

An anesthetic protocol is selected based on physical examination, diagnostic lab work results, your pet's age and medical history, and length of the procedure. Patients that potentially need tooth extractions receive pre-anesthetic pain medication. Isoflurane is the anesthetic we use and is considered to be one of the safest gas anesthetics available.

HOURS

MON
7:30AM – 6:00PM

TUE
7:30AM – 7:00PM

WED
7:30AM – 6:00PM

THU
7:30AM – 6:00PM

FRI
7:30AM – 6:00PM

SAT
8:00AM – 1:00PM

Each pet is constantly monitored during all procedures. Our veterinary technician will evaluate your pet's heart rate, respiration rate, reflexes, gum color and jaw tone to evaluate the depth of the anesthetic. Each patient will also have a patient monitor, which measures heart rate, and oxygen saturation. EKG and blood pressure monitoring are also available if warranted. Mature pets and those with heart or kidney disease will also have an intravenous catheter and IV fluids administered during and after the procedure.

Why does my pet need to have pre-anesthetic blood work?

Whether an animal is 6-months or 16-years of age, a proper pre-anesthetic work-up will help to identify any hidden health problems that may not be detected from a physical examination alone. This may include comprehensive blood chemistries, complete blood cell count, urine analysis, EKG or chest X-rays. Based on these results, an anesthetic protocol is selected or it may be determined that the teeth cleaning procedure should be held off until any detected health problems are under control. Our number one concern is the safety of your pet.

What happens during the teeth cleaning process?

A skilled veterinary technician uses an ultrasonic scaler and hand instruments to remove all the tartar and calculus from above and below the gum line. Tooth infection, decay and bad breath occur because of the bacteria below the gum line. Once the teeth are clean, the teeth are polished smooth, making them more resistant to future tartar development. A periodontal probe and explorer are then used as part of a post-cleaning examination. If a probe depth (pocket around the tooth) is greater than 2mm in dogs or 1mm in cats this indicates that periodontal disease is present and additional treatment may be necessary to save the tooth. A comprehensive oral examination and charting is performed at the time of the teeth cleaning. Dental x-rays show the inside of the tooth and root. Charting a patient's teeth is the recording of abnormalities in a pet's medical record for future reference or to design a treatment plan. Probing in our cat patients will identify feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions (FORL's). These dental resorptions are commonly referred to as cavities or cervical neck lesions. These are common in cats over 5 years of age (although they can and do occur at any age), occur at or below the gum line, and can be quite painful. Although not as common, cavities also occur in dogs.

Are dental radiographs really necessary?

Intra-oral radiographs (X-rays) are a standard in the maintenance of our pets' oral health. These allow us to obtain a diagnosis and formulate a treatment plan allowing the necessary therapy to be performed during the pet's anesthetic procedure. Radiographs serve as a medical record of the patient's dental disease and are shared with the pet owner. This way the owner can better understand the state of the pet's dental disease, the need for the treatment performed, and the importance of follow up visits or home care programs. These radiographs are important because much of tooth pathology lies below the gum line and is not obvious on physical inspection alone. Many times abscessed teeth will appear normal above the gumline. Many treatment decisions are based on these radiograph findings.



Don't wait. Attached to the tartar are bacteria that are irritating to gum tissues. When treated, inflammation (gingivitis) will be resolved. Time between dental cleanings is also breed specific. Small breed dogs and cats need teeth cleanings much more often than larger breed dogs. The intervals between teeth-cleaning procedures will depend on how often you can brush your pet's teeth. If you are unable to brush your pet's teeth, one of our Doctors or technicians can discuss other options.

What can be done for a broken tooth?

If your dog or cat breaks its tooth, there are two treatments: root canal therapy to save the tooth or extraction. Leaving the tooth alone with an exposed nerve is not a humane option. In addition to pain, infection will develop, which can spread to vital organs.

What is periodontal disease?

Periodontal disease is a process in which bacteria and plaque induce an inflammatory process of the gums and supporting tissue of the tooth, and is very common in pets. Signs we notice include bad breath and reddened gums. Gingivitis is a term used to describe inflammation limited to the gums. Gingivitis is reversible and responds well to professional cleaning. Untreated gingivitis, however, will progress to periodontitis; the inflammatory responses that involve the supporting bone and tooth root. The end result of periodontitis is loss of the tooth (or teeth) due to loss of supporting bone. Inflamed gums also provide bacteria with easy access to the blood stream where they can travel and infect major organs. While gingivitis is curable, periodontitis is not. Pets who develop periodontitis will need more frequent teeth cleanings with periodontal treatments. The aim of early & frequent treatment is to prevent progression of gingivitis to periodontitis.

In the beginning stages, cleaning above and below the gum line as well as removal of calculus attached to the tooth will help restore periodontal health. In advanced cases, either periodontal surgery or extractions are needed and periodontal disease is still only managed but not cured. Antibiotics given on a monthly basis also help to control the progression of periodontal disease. Smaller breeds are more prone than larger breeds because teeth are closer together in small dogs, and these dogs usually live longer. Terriers, Maltese, Schnauzers, Cocker Spaniels, Poodles and Shih Tzus are especially prone to develop periodontal disease.

Healthy Tooth



Periodontitis Stage II



Gingivitis

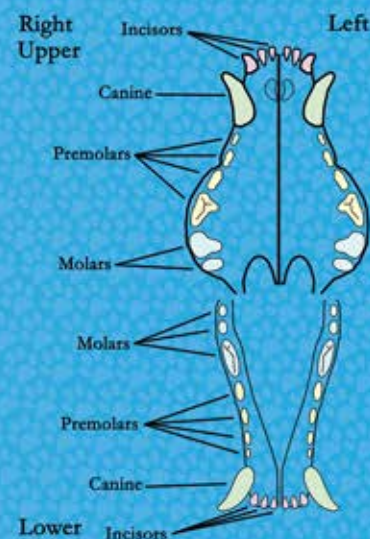


Severe Periodontitis



What is normal anatomy for the dog and cat?

Dogs have 28 primary teeth and 42 adult teeth. Cats have 26 primary teeth and 30 adult teeth. The primary teeth erupt between 3-12 weeks of age. These teeth are replaced by permanent teeth between 4-6 months of age. Incisors are the small teeth in the front of the mouth between the large canine teeth. Dogs and cats have six upper and lower incisor teeth. The canine teeth are the large (fang) teeth located next to the incisors on either side. The incisors and canine teeth are used for grasping food and toys as well as directing the tongue in the mouth.



Next, the premolars are located on either side and in back of the canine teeth. Dogs have four upper and four lower premolars while cats have three upper and two lower premolars. Behind these teeth are molars. Premolars and molars serve to shear, cut, and grind food. The way teeth align with each other is called occlusion. Normal occlusion occurs when the upper incisors just barely overlap the lower incisors. For some dog breeds (such as Boxers and Bulldogs), an underbite (the lower incisors are in front of the upper incisors) is normal.

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2556 EAST BROADWAY, PEARLAND, TX 77581

Home Care

Brushing your pet's teeth is the single most effective means of removing plaque from the visible surface of the tooth. First select a pet toothbrush. We can help you with this. A long-handled, soft bristled brush works well for dogs, while a small specially designed brush works better for our cat patients. Secondly, pet toothpaste needs to be used. Pet toothpastes are designed to be swallowed, taste good to our pets and contain enzymes or antiseptics that help control plaque. Human toothpaste contains too much fluoride for our pets and contains detergents that should not be swallowed. Start slowly, using a washcloth to wipe the teeth. Then move to the flavored toothpaste on the washcloth. Sometimes, applying a small amount of something which your pet really likes to the tooth brush or wash cloth helps. Once your pet is comfortable with brushing, you may introduce the toothbrush and soon it will become routine. Finger-tip brushes are available for those pets that are afraid of the tooth brush. The proper technique for brushing teeth is to apply the bristles at a 45-degree angle to the gums. We recommend brushing the outside of the teeth (nearest to the lips) only. Circular motions work best; however, the key is the abrasive action of the toothbrush. Concentrate on the area where the tooth meets the gum line.

Tartar control diets and treats also serve to reduce plaque. Although not as effective as brushing, special dental diets will reduce the accumulation of plaque and calculus. CET gels and rinses contain chlorhexidine for chemical inhibition of plaque formation and can also be used. When combined with mechanical plaque control (brushing), these measures improve results. Exercise toys, rawhides, and other dental treats help reduce plaque to some degree. CET chews are double coated with an enzyme that when mixed with your pet's saliva helps to break down tartar. Cow hooves, bones, and hard plastic toys should be avoided as they can fracture teeth. Do not play tug-of-war games, especially with young dogs and cats, because this can move growing teeth to abnormal locations. Throwing dogs frisbees can also cause trauma to the teeth resulting in pulpitis (discolored teeth).

Even with good home care, most pets will require professional teeth cleanings at regular intervals. Our teeth cleaning and polishing provides an environment which you can then keep clean. "The more you do at home the less we will have to do in our facility."

Summary

Prevention of future dental problems begins at home. Caring for your pet's teeth at home certainly reduces the frequency of professional care. To help you care for your pet's teeth, we offer a variety of dental products. Our toothpastes and rawhide chews are designed to kill the bacteria associated with plaque. There are several good commercial diets available that greatly reduce plaque as it is developing. Ask us what dental veterinary diets we recommend. Routine home care and semi-annual oral examinations are two services you can and should provide for your companion.

Our goal is to make you aware of the benefits of regular dental care. Just as you brush your teeth and have professional cleanings for good overall health and appearance, your pet requires the same care. When needed, we can safely anesthetize your pet, clean and polish his teeth, take dental x-rays and perform many of the advanced procedures your pet may need.

It should be noted that in the majority of patients the benefits of a dental procedure far outweigh the risks of anesthesia. In fact, untreated periodontal disease will result in far more complications than anesthesia.

For additional information regarding dental cleanings, please watch our Education Tracks video on our website.

Links to Social Media Sites
Can Be Found On Our Website
www.CPVH.com

