

# A Pet Parent's Guide to Teeth Cleaning

Proper oral care for our pets includes brushing their teeth at home and taking them to the vet for professional dental cleanings.

Let's look at how to care for your pet's teeth, and why it's important.

## Why Is My Pet's Dental Care Important?

Good dental care is key to your pet's health and happiness. Poor oral hygiene can cause several health problems, such as:

- Painful, swollen, bleeding gums
- Tooth loss
- Tooth infections (root abscesses)
- Tooth fractures
- Gum disease (periodontal disease)
- Organ Damage
- Respiratory infections
- Oral tumors

## What Are the Symptoms of Dental Disease in Pets?

Because pets are good at hiding pain, they may not have any symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they most likely will include:

- Bad breath
- Yellow or brown teeth
- Excessive drooling
- Facial swelling and/or red, inflamed gums
- Weight loss
- Decreased appetite and/or favoring one side of the mouth while chewing
- Irritability
- Bleeding from the gums
- Sneezing and/or nasal discharge



## Tips for Brushing Your Pet's Teeth

After purchasing a pet-safe toothbrush and toothpaste, you'll be ready to brush your pet's teeth.

To make this a positive experience for your four-legged family member, remember to have patience, go slow, and brush softly, as brushing too hard can cause gingival damage.

Use these steps to guide you in brushing your pet's teeth:

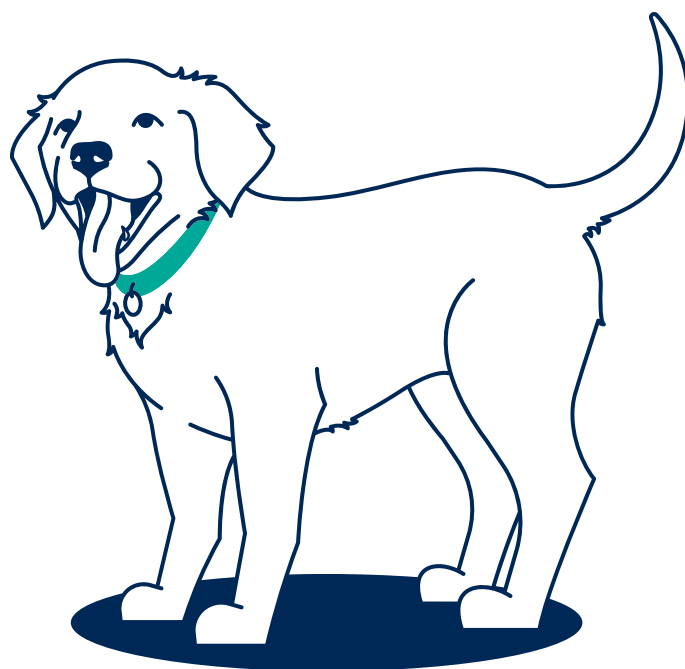
- Apply your pet-safe toothpaste to the toothbrush and moisten with water.
- Apply toothbrush to your pet's teeth at a 45-degree angle.
- As you start brushing, address each region individually, such as back right or front left.
- Focus on three horizontal strokes (back and forth) and then a final stroke going from gumline toward the tips of the crown.
- The back teeth can be a place where tartar rapidly accumulates. To help expose the back teeth, gently pull your pet's lip back at the corner of the mouth.

Once the brushing is complete, make sure to offer your pet lots of love, praise, and a high-value treat.

## How Often Should I Brush My Pet's Teeth?

To prevent dental disease, vets typically recommended that you brush your pet's teeth at home at least three times per week.

However, every pet has individual needs. Talk with your veterinarian on how frequently you should brush your furry friend's teeth.



## What Happens When My Pet Has a Professional Dental Cleaning?

Along with consistent at-home care, you'll need to take your pet to the vet for a professional dental cleaning once a year. Typically, dental cleanings take a few hours.

During the dental cleaning, your vet will:

- **Put your pet under anesthesia.** Your pet will be safely placed under anesthesia, and a breathing tube is put in place. Anesthesia is the safest method for keeping water out of the airway, is not stressful or painful, and allows for a complete exam and treatment.
- **Perform an oral exam.** A tooth-by-tooth exam is done, which includes measuring the gum pocket for periodontal health; checking for fractured teeth, cavities, and loose teeth; and looking at the soft tissues of the mouth (tongue, palate, and back of the throat to look for ulcers or masses).
- **Scale and polish your pet's teeth.** Scaling removes plaque and tartar above and below the gum line and is always followed by polishing to smooth the surface of the teeth.
- **Take dental X-rays.** Dental X-rays show the tooth roots, the bone and tissue around the roots, the pulp canal inside the tooth, and the jaw bones.

**Anesthesia should always be used** when a pet is undergoing a professional teeth cleaning.

Anesthesia-free cleanings cannot offer a full cleaning of a pet's teeth, can cause a pet unneeded stress, and won't allow for X-rays.

Additionally, anesthesia-free dental procedures can't clean under a pet's gumline to prevent periodontal disease. They also don't allow a vet to look beneath the gumline to identify problems before they become serious.

