

The Warning Signs

All pets are at risk for developing dental problems, with smaller dog breeds having the highest prevalence. Some common signs of periodontal disease include:

- Bad breath.
- Yellow-brown crust on the teeth.
- Pain or bleeding when your pet eats or when you touch its mouth or gums.

There may also be dental problems when your pet:

- Is sensitive when you touch its face.
- Frequently drops food from its mouth.
- Is lethargic or less active.

Toothbrushes and Toothpaste

You can purchase a special pet toothbrush from your veterinarian or use a human soft bristle brush with a small head. A child's soft bristle brush works well for cats and small to medium dogs.

It is very important to use only toothpaste made for pets. We recommend the CET brand vet toothpaste. Pet toothpaste comes in different flavors to help make it more appealing to your pet. Human toothpaste is inappropriate for pets.

Brushing—The Best Defense

For some people, the thought of brushing their pet's teeth may seem a bit outlandish. But it is important to know that regularly brushing your pet's teeth can help prevent chronic dental pain, avoid serious systemic infections, and decrease the frequency of professional cleaning under anesthesia.

How to Start

Training your pet to adapt to brushing may take several days to weeks. It is important to start gradually and slowly introduce the brushing techniques. Also remember to give your pet lots of praise and special treats when you finish each session.

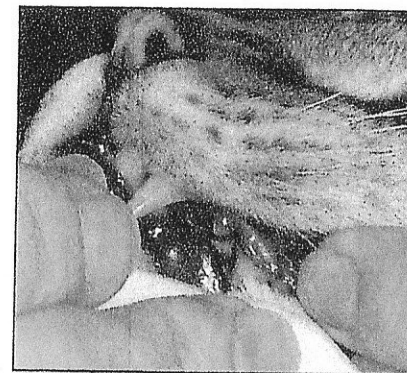
Step 1—Start by gently handling your pet's face, lips and mouth. Initially this can be a short session of just touching these areas. Try to do this at the same time each day so that your pet begins to see it as a special time for interaction with you. Advance to Step 2 when your pet no longer resists this stage.

Step 2—Once your pet is used to this, begin working inside the mouth. With gentle pressure, briefly rub your finger along your pet's teeth and gums. Gradually increase the length of this session until your pet no longer resists having their teeth and gums handled. Remember to give them plenty of praise and a special treat at the end of each session.

Special Tip: Don't try to open your pet's mouth. It is easier if you just lift up your pet's lip and rub the teeth with your fingers. Use this same technique when brushing the teeth.

Step 3—The final step is to introduce a toothbrush and toothpaste. Make the first sessions with the toothbrush brief so your pet becomes accustomed to this new experience. Gradually lengthen the time of brushing so that you can do a more thorough job cleaning. Instead of a toothbrush, you may also use gauze or a specially-designed finger brush.

Just brush the outer surface of the teeth that face the lip. It is not necessary to brush the surface that faces the tongue. Pay special attention to the large molars on the top. This is the area where the plaque accumulates most quickly. Give your pet a lot of praise and a special treat when you are done brushing their teeth.



Brushing a cat's teeth.



Brushing a dog's teeth.