



DENTAL HEALTH

Pet Owner's Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How much does it cost to clean my pet's teeth?

A. Costs depend on the stage of dental disease that your pet has. Fees for the procedures may vary. In addition ancillary treatment such as IV catheters, fluid therapy, and medications may be necessary. You may ask for a dental estimate at your pet's next office visit. An estimate will incorporate anesthesia, monitoring, and the procedure itself.

Q. Is general anesthesia necessary to clean teeth?

A. Yes. It is impossible to use the mechanical and sharp instruments in the mouth without the patient being completely still. The slightest movement can cause harm. In addition, scaling below the gum line is a very important part of the procedure. This is where many bacteria can hide. Failure to remove these bacteria eliminates much of the medical benefit from the procedure.

Q. I am afraid of having general anesthesia used on my pet, what can be done?

A. Safety starts out with a good physical exam. Next we run preanesthetic blood panels. Evaluating the internal organs and blood in this manner improves safety by detecting underlying disease. Gas anesthetics such as Sevoflurane and Isoflurane have tremendously improved anesthesia safety. Monitoring by blood pressure, pulse oximeter (oxygen content of blood stream), EKG, and respiration rate have also increased safety. The risk of anesthesia verses the benefit of treatment should be discussed with your veterinarian on an individual basis. In our practice, close monitoring of each patient by a licensed technician allow careful continuous observation of the anesthetized patient.



Q. Will my pet suffer if I don't take care of it's teeth and gums?

A. Gum disease and tooth root infections can cause pets pain and serious dental problems anytime in life. But gum disease can be prevented! Begin early in your pet's life to care for it's teeth and you may spare your pet the discomfort caused by gum and tooth disorders.

Q. Can pets get cavities?

A. Pets, like their human owners, can get cavities. However, cavities are relatively rare in pets because their diets generally aren't high in decay-causing sugars. Veterinary dental experts noticed a mild rise in the incidence of cavities among pets fed sugary treats. To prevent cavities in your pet's mouth, feed only pet food and treats designed for pets.

Q. What causes a dog to break it's teeth?

A. The most common cause of tooth breakage among dogs is chewing on objects that are too hard. To help prevent breakage, watch how your dog chews on any new toy. If it is aggressively biting down or trying to crack the toy, you probably



shouldn't let your dog chew on that particular toy. For especially aggressive chewers, look for toys they can't get their mouths around. Kong toys, Greenies and Pedigree dentabones that soften as the dog chew are also alternative options.

Q. Isn't bad breath in pets just natural?

A. NO! While it is true that bad breath can indicate a more serious illness, bad breath in pets is often caused by bacteria that form when plaque and tartar are not removed from the teeth. This accumulation of plaque and tartar can contribute to gum infection.



Q. How can a professional dental cleaning by a veterinarian help my pet?

A. A professional dental cleaning will remove plaque, stain and tartar encrusted above and below the gum-line and will restore your animal's teeth to a clean and polished condition.

Q. What is causing a big, swollen bump on my cat's gum?

A. Isolated swelling on the gum above one tooth could indicate a couple of different problems, such as feline dental resorptive lesions or an abscessed tooth root. In both cases, immediate veterinary care is indicated. Left untreated, cervical line lesions (also known as *feline dental resorptive lesions*) are especially painful and can lead to tooth loss in cats. Swellings can also represent overgrowth of gum tissue from inflammation, or in some cases, tumors.

Q. My dog shows a ridge-like wear on it's canine teeth. What causes this?

A. Wear patterns occur from repeated chewing. The ridge-like wear you describe could be attributed to chewing on, for example, a chain-link fence. Dogs that are alone in backyards may chew fences because they are bored, scared, frustrated or for other reasons. The best solution is to keep the dog and the fence away from each other.



Q. Do dogs wear braces?

A. For some dogs, braces are necessary to straighten the teeth enough so the dog's mouth opens and closes correctly. Orthodontics work can vary from limited work on a few teeth to a full set of braces. These procedures are performed by dental specialists.

Q. Does it matter whether my pet eats hard or soft food?

A. Studies show that hard kibbles are better at keeping plaque from accumulating on the teeth. Currently, there is a separate product for dogs and cats that has been proven to help reduce plaque and tartar. If you think your pet needs a special food, consult your pet's veterinarian.



Q. When is my pet too old for tooth brushing?

A. Your pet is never too old for tooth brushing. In fact, the older your pet gets, the more important it is to keep plaque and tartar from accumulating. Studies show that bacteria from dental disease can move systematically into the vital organs leading to both renal and heart disease. Keeping your pet's mouth healthy is an important part of your pet's overall good health.