

DENTISTRY 101: LET'S TALK BASICS

AT HOME DENTAL CARE:

- When should I start brushing my pets teeth?
 - We recommend starting as a puppy or kitten to help them get used to the process.
 - Ideally teeth should be brushed daily for the best results, but at minimum aim for 3 times a week, any less than that and you aren't going to get much of a benefit.
- What should I use?
 - Any pet approved tooth paste is fine. There are many different styles of tooth brushes available as well. Do not use human tooth paste.
- Are there other options other than tooth brushing?
 - Yes! Tooth brushing is statistically the most effective, but there are many dental chews or treats, supplements and water additives as well.
 - We recommend using the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) website to find a good list of effective product options!
- I'm doing at home dental care but the tartar isn't going away!
 - Firstly at home dental care won't entirely prevent tartar accumulation but it can help to slow it down dramatically, lengthening the time between needed dental cleanings with your veterinarian.
 - If you are instituting at home dental care when your pet already has tartar build up, it won't typically get rid of the existing tartar (think of it like concrete stuck to the tooth), BUT it will help reduce any additional tartar build up.

WHEN DOES MY PET NEED A DENTAL CLEANING?

- When in doubt we recommend scheduling a dental assessment with your veterinarian to assess your pet's dental health. They will be able to guide you towards the best options for your pet.
- It is always best to pursue prophylactic dental cleanings. This means we want to clean your pets teeth *before* they develop any unhealthy teeth. This is just like you have done yearly at your dentist!
- If tartar is left alone it will continue to accumulate and lead to problems with the teeth such as gum recession, root exposure, pain, infection, etc.
- Trust us when we say we don't want to have to pull any teeth! We want your pet to keep all their pearly whites! Staying on top of their dental health will reduce your pets risk for needing teeth extracted.
- Some breeds may be genetically more predisposed to poor dental health such as brachycephalic animals, yorkies, chihuahuas, dachshunds, greyhounds, etc.



DENTAL DISEASE:

- Dental disease is what happens when tartar is left on the teeth and they are not cleaned. The tartar will continue to serve as a trap for more debris and bacteria which will eventually accumulate to a level where the gums will start to recede and expose the roots of the tooth or create pocketing around the tooth roots. When this happens most often these teeth need to be removed.
- What happens when the teeth are infected?
 - There are many symptoms you can see from very bad breath, severe gingivitis, dental pain, bleeding of the gums, discharge from around the teeth, facial swelling most commonly under the eye is indicative of infection of the molar teeth. Nasal discharge or chronic sneezing, particularly if one sided drainage or discharge, can indicate infection of the teeth and most commonly the upper canines.
- How can I tell if my pet is painful?
 - Sometimes it can be VERY difficult to determine oral pain in pets. Most pets will continue to eat normally despite dental disease. Some you may notice will have a decrease in appetite, may favor chewing only on one side of the mouth or start to refuse eating harder kibble or chewing on their normal toys. Finding bits of kibble dropped around their bowl can also be an indicator. If severe they may paw or rub at their face or be very reactive if you try and look in their mouth.
- What happens if I don't clean them?
 - They will get worse. They will be painful if not already.
 - Untreated dental disease can raise the risk for other health issues such as heart disease. This is due to oral bacteria entering the blood stream and travelling to the heart. They can also sometimes travel to other locations such as the kidneys or other organs.

STAGES:

