

5 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR PET'S DENTAL HEALTH



You already know that keeping your teeth fresh and clean doesn't just give you a great smile, it's also important for your overall health. But did you know it's just as important to keep your cat and dog's teeth clean?

Doggy breath can be bad enough, but neglected teeth can lead to gingivitis, an early phase of gum disease. Left untreated, gingivitis will develop into periodontitis, which is a serious infection of the gums and bones that support teeth. Periodontal disease—both in humans and in pets—is linked with other serious systemic health issues, including heart disease, kidney failure and arthritis.

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As part of a healthy lifestyle and to help reduce the risk of oral disease, follow these five steps to good oral health.

1) See your vet regularly

An oral health check-up is part of every vet visit. With regular exams, your vet can help stop small problems from getting worse. They can let you know if you are doing a good job of keeping your pet's teeth clean and when it's time for professional care.

2) Keep your pet's mouth clean

Brush your pet's teeth. (Yes, really!) The best time to start is when your pet is a young puppy or kitten—they will grow up knowing that tooth-brushing is just a regular part of life. However, with a little bit of patience, your adult dog or cat can get used to this important bit of healthcare, too.

Do not use human toothpaste for your dog or cat. Most human toothpastes include detergents, which your pet will swallow during brushing and may cause vomiting. You can find safe toothpastes formulated for dogs and cats from your veterinarian. They even come in delicious flavours like chicken or beef!

3) Watch what you feed them

Bacteria naturally accumulate in a soft film on the surface of all pets' teeth. This film is known as plaque. Over time, minerals deposit within the plaque, and it hardens into a hard-to-remove substance called calculus, or tartar. Many people believe that feeding dry kibble instead of canned food will protect their pets' teeth from tartar. The reality is that many dogs that eat exclusively dry diets develop plaque and periodontal disease. A few clinically formulated dry diets have been specifically designed and proven to prevent and remove plaque and tartar while your pet eats. Your veterinarian can recommend the right tartar control diet for your pet.

Many people believe that their pets' teeth will be cleaned mechanically when chewing on hides or bones...



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however, anatomical, and nutritional differences between individuals mean that this is often inadequate. Additionally, feeding raw or cooked bones poses health risks including dental fractures, intestinal obstruction or injury, and bacterial illness. Avoiding bones altogether is the more prudent approach.

4) Check your cat or dog's mouth regularly

It's never safe to assume that bad breath is normal. In between your veterinary examinations, you can investigate the source any stinky breath by checking your pet's mouth for:

- Loose teeth
- Tartar (yellowish-brown material that builds up along the gum line)
- Excessive drooling
- Foreign material in the mouth or between the teeth
- Discoloured, broken, missing or crooked teeth
- Red, swollen, painful or bleeding gums
- Bumps or growths within the mouth

Also watch for pawing at the face or mouth or changes in eating habits. Report any problems you notice to your vet.

5) Let them play with chew toys

It's never safe to assume that bad breath is normal. In between your veterinary examinations, you can investigate the source any There are many types of chew toys specially designed to strengthen and clean your dog's gums and teeth. Consider rope toys that help floss your dog's teeth, kongs or hard rubber toys with lots of bumpy texture.

Following these tips can help your pets keep their pearly whites—and their good health—for years to come. Make it part of your regular visits to the veterinarian. Preventive dental care is covered under the Pets Plus Us [Flex Care Plan](#).

