

## Common signs of dental problems:

- Bad breath
- Sore Mouth
- Difficulty eating
- Loose teeth or tooth loss
- Pawing or rubbing the mouth
- Bleeding gums
- Tartar on teeth
- Drooling



There are some factors that can contribute to dental problems in your pet.

These include:

- **Age**– Dental disease is more common in older pets.
- **Breed**– Smaller dogs are more likely to have crowded or misaligned teeth that are difficult to keep clean, making them more prone to dental disease.
- **Diet**– Feeding soft foods can lead to a more rapid build-up of plaque.



## Your Pet's Dental Health





## Guide to Oral Healthcare

It can be difficult to keep your pet's teeth clean, so oral health problems can be common. In fact, research shows that around the age of 2, 70% of cats and 80% of dogs have some signs of dental disease. Problems usually start with a build-up of sticky tartar that hardens to form plaque. If not removed, this can lead to gingivitis, a painful condition of inflamed gums, and eventually periodontal disease may develop. Dental disease doesn't affect just the mouth. It can lead to more serious health problems including heart, lung and kidney disease, which makes it all the more important that you provide your pets with proper dental care from the start. This includes brushing at home, and dental examinations and cleanings with your Veterinarian.



### **Brushing your pet's teeth at home:**

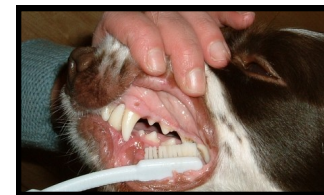
To introduce a fearful Fido or timid Tabby to the idea of dental care, start slowly and gradually. Dip a finger into beef bouillon (for dogs) or tuna water (for cats) and gently rub along your pet's gums and teeth. The most important area to focus on is the gum line (the crevice where the gums meet the teeth), where bacteria and food mix to form plaque. Focusing on the gum line, start at the front of the mouth, then move to the back upper and lower teeth and gum areas. Once your pet is okay with this, gradually introduce gauze over your finger and rub the teeth and gums in a circular fashion.

When your four-legged friend can handle the gauze, try brushing with a toothbrush specially designed for pets or a very soft, ultra-sensitive toothbrush designed for people. The bristles should be held at a 45-degree angle to the tooth surface and be moved in an oval motion. Scrub in the gum line, as this is where odor and infection begin.

Gradually add special dog/cat toothpaste (flavored with meat or fish), but never use people toothpaste or baking soda, as both will upset your pet's stomach.

Use the following process to clean the inside surfaces of your pet's teeth:

- Place your hand over your pet's muzzle from the top
- Gently squeeze and push his lips on one side between the back teeth (to keep his mouth open)
- Pull his head back gently so his mouth opens
- Brush his teeth on the opposite side
- Repeat this process for the other side



The entire process should only take a minute or two. If your dog or cat continues to resist, try gently wrapping him in a large bath towel with only his head sticking out. Above all, avoid overstraining and keep sessions short and positive.