

Pet Owner's Guide to Dental Home Care

Taking care of your pet's teeth on a regular basis provides many benefits for your pet. Dental home care is the single most important aspect of regular dental care. Providing your pet with regular dental care may require some time and effort on your part. However, the reward comes with your pet's health and comfort. Daily brushing of teeth can delay the need for professional dental cleaning, thus minimizing anesthetic exposure to your pet. The frequency of professional cleaning will vary with your pet's individual needs.

Tooth Brushing

Daily brushing of the teeth with soft-bristled toothbrush is the most effective way to keep your pet's teeth clean.



The fibers of the toothbrush are able to reach between teeth and under gums to pick out tiny deposits of food, to provide the closest possible cleaning. The canine and feline brushes are designed to conform to a pet's mouth. Finger brushes are also available.

Instructions for Brushing Your Pet's Teeth (From the makers of C.E.T. Toothpaste):

When you begin teaching your pet about tooth brushing you are introducing a new routine that will become a lifelong habit. TAKE YOUR TIME. Choose a quiet time when you and your pet are both relaxed. Short daily training sessions are the most effective; the entire process may take a few weeks. Give your pet time to accept each stage of the training process before advancing. Be consistent, and use reassurance and reward.



Step 1

Acquaint your pet with the process.
Begin slowly, merely touching the muzzle and lifting the lips to expose the teeth and gums. Over a few days, begin handling the mouth gently and eventually stroke the pet's teeth and gums with a finger.



Step 2

Introduce the toothbrush and toothpaste
Place a small amount of C.E.T. toothpaste on your finger and allow your pet to sample the taste. Then apply a small amount to the teeth and gums. Most pets accept this quite well and consider it a treat. When you can touch all of the teeth, place a small amount of toothpaste on the brush and gently brush one tooth and the adjoining gum line.



Step 3

Begin brushing
Gradually increase the number of teeth brushed working your way to the back molars. The pet's mouth may remain closed. The accumulation of plaque occurs mainly on the outside of the teeth. Angle the brush at a 45 degree angle toward the gum line and use small circular strokes, gently brushing all of the teeth. Once the habit of tooth brushing has been established, brush the teeth every day if possible.

Go online at www.felinevideos.vet.cornell.edu to view a video demonstration. (Feline Only)

Dental Home Care Products

Toothpaste

DO NOT USE HUMAN TOOTHPASTE ON YOUR PET.

Toothpaste for people contains sudsing agents, which are not expected to be swallowed. These will upset your pet's stomach as your pet is not able to rinse out his or her mouth. Also, pets generally dislike the flavor of human toothpastes.



C.E.T. Veterinary Toothpaste is available in a variety of flavors including poultry, malt, beef, and vanilla mint. Some pets view brushing as a “treat” because of the flavor of the toothpaste. C.E.T. toothpaste also contains an enzyme system that may aid in the prevention of dental disease.

Some pet owners find it easier to place a small amount of toothpaste on a piece of gauze, pantyhose, or other fabric, somewhat textured for gentle abrasion. The toothpaste-coated fabric wrapped around a finger, can be used to “brush” the teeth or provide gentle massage of the teeth and gums while applying the toothpaste.

Dental Oral Rinse or Gel



Some pets will not allow anyone to actually touch their teeth. For these pets there is dental oral rinse, which can be sprayed into the mouth as an antibacterial and anti-plaque wash. As noted above, the spray can be applied to a tissue or cloth and rubbed on the teeth as well. Similarly, antiseptic dental gel can also be applied to the teeth with a finger or a cotton swab.

Chewing Aids and Dental Treats



Chew Aids for Dogs

CET Rawhide Strips are enzymatically treated. The action of chewing on the rawhide reduces dental plaque, and gingivitis. These and any other edible dental chews should only be given

with supervision, as there is some risk of choking or stomach upset if too large a piece is swallowed.



Chew Aids for Cats

CET Chews are made with freeze-dried fish and contain enzymes to help remove dental plaque. One chew a day can help reduce gingivitis. Also, a variety of brands of tartar control cat treats are available in most supermarkets.



Dental Diets

Several pet food companies have developed dental diets to help keep pet's teeth clean. These diets are composed of a large-sized kibble that has a fibrous interior. When the teeth sink into the kibble, the fibers in the food provide gentle abrasion to the tooth surface, thereby removing plaque. These diets will not remove existing dental tartar, but will help prevent its buildup on clean teeth.

Dental diets are appropriate maintenance diets for adult pets, but generally not for growing puppies/kittens or pregnant and nursing animals. Studies suggest that using the dental diet as the pet's main food source provided the best results, although some benefit was still noted when the dental diet was fed as a percentage of the total diet. The diet has minimal effect when only given as a treat.

The Do's and Don'ts of Dental Home Care

Don't attempt to clean the inner surface of your pet's teeth.

Do try to perform dental home care at least once daily.

Don't perform dental home care during the first week after a full dentistry in the hospital as your pet's gums may be tender.

Do schedule regular veterinary visits for your pets to assess dental health.

Don't let your dog chew on cow hooves or nyla bones as these are too hard and teeth may break against them.

Do use approved dental treats in between brushing your pet's teeth. (See VOHC website below for list of approved dental treats)

Don't consider dental home care as an alternative to full dental cleaning if your pet has more advanced dental disease.



For More Information

Visit the following sites for up to date animal health information:

Veterinarypartner.com

Veterinary Oral Health Council Website www.VOHC.org

The Virbac Dental Website at www.CETUniversity.com

The American Veterinary Dental College at www.AVDC.org