

Dental Health 101



Why should I brush my pet's teeth?

Brushing your pet's teeth on a routine basis can present many benefits. Without routine brushing, the dental tartar that can harbor loads of bacteria causing bad breath can progress to dental tartar which in turn, can cause a tremendous level of pain and inflammation to the gums or "gingivitis". If left untreated, dental disease can cause unnecessary tooth loss. More importantly, **critical organ systems** can be affected by advanced dental disease including the heart, kidneys, and liver. Therefore, brushing your pet's teeth on a routine basis can help keep the breath fresh, organ systems healthy, and preserve healthy teeth. It may also greatly delay the need for a professional scaling and polishing of the teeth by your veterinarian.

How do I brush my pet's teeth?

For most pets, tooth brushing should be a gradual process. Your pet should become very familiar with you manipulating the lips and teeth prior to introducing a toothbrush. You may find adding a creamy treat to your fingers such as cheese or peanut butter as you manipulate the mouth to encourage your pet to cooperate. Later, the addition of a finger brush or gauze pad may be helpful to continue the process. Once your pet is comfortable with this action, a toothbrush can be introduced.

- Use a pea-sized amount of pet-approved toothpaste
- Focus on teeth that accumulate plaque faster
- Lift the upper lip & brush the outer surfaces of the cheek teeth gently in a circular motion
- Repeat on the other side
- Brush all other outer portions of the teeth in the same way

Good guidelines to follow:

- Brush daily or at least 1-2 times weekly
- Give dental treats to remove plaque
- Introduce a dental diet food
- Visit the Veterinary Oral Health Council at vohc.org for a list of products that optimize oral health



Starter Kit: What Will I Need?

- * Creamy treats (peanut butter, cream cheese, etc.)
- * Fingerbrush or gauze pads
- * Tooth brush (pet or pediatric)
- * Pet approved toothpaste

