



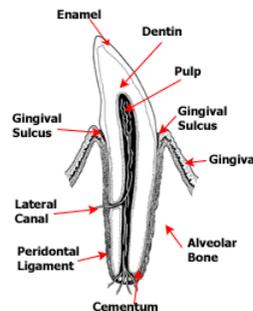
## TAKING CARE OF YOUR PETS TEETH

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### Dental Disease

**Plaque** is the main cause of periodontal and other oral diseases. It is a soft, whitish accumulation on the surfaces in the mouth especially the teeth consisting of salivary glycoproteins and bacteria. It is a similar colour to the teeth so it is not often visible. Plaque builds up daily even if there is no food being eaten. Eventually the plaque will mineralise and form calculus (tartar) on the teeth – this can happen quickly, less than 48hrs after the start of plaque accumulation.

Metabolic products and toxins produced by the bacteria in plaque can cause an inflammatory reaction in the gums at the tooth margin – this is known as **gingivitis**. Gingivitis is seen as red and possibly swollen gums usually where the gum meets the teeth. As the gum margin becomes inflamed, and the sulcus becomes deeper, the bacteria found in this area are generally more harmful.



At a certain stage, for reasons not fully understood, the animals' reaction to the irritation from plaque changes. The response, which is mainly under genetic control\* changes from simple inflammation to one that involves breakdown of the tissues that hold the tooth in place – this is known as **periodontal disease**. Once the support structures have been destroyed the changes are irreversible and the tooth will either fall out or have to be removed. Research shows that at around the age of two, 70% of cats and 80% of dogs have some signs of dental disease.

The gums are a very vascular tissue (large blood supply) and once inflamed the bacteria involved can readily be transferred into the blood

stream. This can lead to a bacteraemia (bacteria in blood stream) which can potentially set up infection any where in the rest of the body. In humans there has been a link with heart disease.

### ORAL HYGIENE – HOME CARE

- Without adequate home care all the benefits of a 'scale and polish' at the vet's will only last a matter of weeks.
- The single most effective method of plaque control is tooth brushing. If your pet really doesn't allow this there are other methods to help reduce plaque which are outlined below.
- Importance of plaque control:
  - No more bad breath
  - Healthier pet with a greater life expectancy
  - Keep teeth for longer
  - Reduced need for veterinary dental treatment and thus associated expense



**FREE NURSE DENTAL CHECKS**  
 We recommended a check every 3 months

### Tooth Brushing

- Periodontal disease in dogs is known to be the same disease process as in humans, and is likely to be the same or similar in cats.
- People do not question that they should brush their own teeth every day and this should apply to their pets also.
- Daily brushing establishes a routine and plaque is removed before it begins to harden into calculus (tartar).
- The most important place to brush is at the gum line – any areas of gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) may bleed when brushed, this is not often associated with pain and regular brushing will help improve gum health.
- Selecting a tooth brush:
  - A medium hardness brush is best

*Severe periodontal disease*



- Small headed brushes are better for smaller dogs and cats
- There are a number of different styles of toothbrush ranging from human brushes to rubber thimble like brushes that fit onto your finger



➤ **Toothpaste:**

- The main function of pet toothpaste is to encourage co-operation especially in cats
- Human toothpastes should not be used as the fluoride is not tolerated well in animals
- Mint flavoured toothpastes are not well liked especially by cats
- Malt flavour is liked well
- There are also toothpastes that contain enzymes that are thought to help in the breakdown and removal of plaque
- Dentagen toothpaste contains a biofilm that works by making it harder for bacteria to stick to the teeth

➤ **Technique:**

- It is advisable to introduce tooth brushing to your pet gradually using the following approach:
  - First just use a finger, perhaps with some toothpaste, to rub the outer surfaces of the teeth, do this for a few minutes 2-3x a day for a few days
  - Then when your pet is comfortable with that use a toothbrush and starting with the back teeth get them used to the movement of the brush against the teeth, again spread this stage over a few days
  - From here slowly build up the number of teeth you brush and work your way forwards in the mouth
  - If your dog or cat is very co-operative they may even let you do the chewing or



inside surface of the teeth as well



*Severe periodontal disease in a cat*

Alternatives to ]

- There are enzymatic gels that can be smeared onto the teeth if your pet will not accept brushing but still allows you access to their mouth. An example of this is **Logic Gel**.
- Some pets completely refuse to have their mouths touched or opened; in this case there are powders that can be added to the food to help dissolve plaque. An example of this is **Plaque-off**.
- **Dentagen Aqua** can be added to drinking water and provides 24 hour protection against plaque.
- Chewing toys etc can remove some plaque by sliding over the tooth surface but the shape of the teeth means that certain areas are missed, and in particular the tooth at the gum margin which is the most important is not touched due to the bulge of the crown.
- However, there are specific chews i.e. Dentastixs, Dentagen chews, rasks and **Royal Canin oral bars**, that are designed to aid cleaning when chewed and help reduce plaque formation. (Fed daily **Royal Canin oral bars** can reduce tartar build-up by up to 73%)
- **Royal Canin Veterinary Lifestage diets:**
  - All contain sodium tripolyphosphate which binds calcium so it is unavailable to build up tartar
  - Please ask reception for a leaflet for more information
- **Royal Canin Dental Diet:**





- Texture and shape of kibble produce a gentle abrasive effect on the teeth during chewing
- Contains sodium tripolyphosphate like the lifestage diets
- Contains zinc to help slow down tartar build-up, has antiseptic properties and helps reduce bad breath
- Contains green tea polyphenols to help maintain a healthy mouth and gums
- Please ask reception for a leaflet for more information

*\*Generally pure-bred cats and dogs are more prone to periodontal disease, certain breeds are also over represented such as Yorkies, Greyhounds and Abyssinians.*