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Keep Your Dog Smiling With Preventative Dog Dental Care

By Teresa James

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What should pet owners know about dog dental care and periodontal disease?

An important aspect of the good dog dental care is proper dental hygiene. One of the most common ailments treated by veterinarians is periodontal or gum disease. Gum disease is progressive. It starts out with the formation of plaque, a sticky bacterial film that forms in the mouth at the gum line. If not removed plaque will harden into tartar above and below the gum line. This build up causes the gums to become red and swollen, a condition known as gingivitis.

If gingivitis is left untreated it can lead to advanced gum disease. Red swollen gums will begin to recede as the infection travels down into the root of the tooth and the jawbone. Once the gums have receded the damage is irreversible and the gums will not grow back. This is known as periodontal disease and results in loss of bone and loss of teeth. At this advanced stage the bacteria from the oral infection may now enter the bloodstream. This can lead to more serious problems such as heart, liver and kidney disease. These conditions if left untreated can eventually become life threatening. These problems can also be prevented by implementing a good dog dental care routine.

Why should I routinely inspect my dog's mouth?

By two or three years of age many pets start to show signs of oral disease. By implementing a home dog dental care routine you can assure that your dog's mouth stays healthy, clean and pain free. Start by routinely inspecting your dog's mouth. A healthy mouth will not smell offensive. The teeth will be clean and will not have any yellow or brown spots. The gums will be a healthy pink color and will hug the teeth.

What are the signs of gum disease in dogs?

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Persistent bad breath, brownish deposits around the gum line, especially on back teeth, red swollen gums, loose teeth, painful and or bleeding gums are all indicators of oral disease. Although bad breath or "doggy breath" is the most obvious sign of a problem, many pet owners fail to recognize it as an indicator of dental problems until it's too late. As part of a good dog dental care routine check your dog's mouth at the slightest sign of a persistent offensive odor. Other indications can be decreased appetite and weight loss, a change in chewing habits, lethargy, and pawing of the mouth or the face.

What should I do if my dog's mouth shows signs of gum disease?

Dog dental care starts by checking your dog's mouth regularly. If you see any of these signs call your vet to schedule a dental exam. Your dog may just need a routine cleaning. The cleaning process is performed under general anesthesia. If the condition is minor, it's not much different than a dental cleaning that you or I would have done. Your dog's teeth will be scaled to remove tartar above and below the gum line and then they will be polished. Since your dog can't rinse and spit the mouth area will be flushed to clear it of any loosened debris.

If the condition is more serious your vet may need to administer an antibiotic to clear up any gum infection before cleaning your dog's teeth. Blood work will usually be taken so that your vet can determine if the infection has spread into the bloodstream. If the disease is in the advanced stages your vet may also need to extract some teeth. Whatever the outcome, your dog is sure to feel a lot better after receiving some much needed dog dental care.

Remember to regularly inspect your pet's mouth, schedule periodic dental check ups, and perform routine home dental care.

How important is home dog dental care?

Regular cleanings by your vet followed up by a home dental care program can help keep your dog's mouth healthy and disease free. Even if your dog's teeth are currently in good condition a preventative home dental care routine is essential to your dog's health. If not regularly removed, plaque and tartar build up can progress very quickly into full blown periodontal disease.

If you're new to dog dental care ask your vet to show you how to brush your dog's teeth. Also find out if there is anything else that your vet would recommend adding to your dog's preventative home dental care routine.

One recommendation is to entice your dog to chew. Daily chewing exercises will help remove food debris and prevent tartar build up. They're also great for relieving boredom and separation anxiety. So put your pet to work. Give your dog plenty of fun and yummy real bones, dental dog chew toys, and edible dog chews as part of your home dog dental care routine.

Do I need to brush my dog's teeth?

The most direct method of preventative dog dental care is brushing your dog's teeth regularly. Vets usually recommend that you brush your dog's teeth at least two times a week. If your dog is prone to

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dental disease you may need to do this more often.

What should I use to brush my dog's teeth?

If you have a young puppy introducing a tooth brushing routine will probably be much easier than if you have an adult dog. In either case start slow, keep the sessions short, and be very gentle while working in your dog's mouth. Use lots of praise and reassurance to reinforce good behavior. You will not want to give your dog treats during this task for obvious reasons.

Since a dog will swallow whatever you use never brush your dog's teeth with "people" toothpaste. This toothpaste is not formulated to be ingested and can upset your dog's stomach. It's also designed to foam which is not desirable when brushing a dog's teeth. So use a pet toothpaste formulated for dog dental care that does not require rinsing.

You will also need a pet toothbrush. There's a great triple sided pet toothbrush that will get the job done faster than a traditional style toothbrush. Or if you have a small dog you may want to try a pet finger toothbrush. Finger toothbrushes slip right onto your finger and are easily controlled to reach the common trouble spots up near the gum line. Add some specially formulated tartar removing toothpaste and you're all set. Dog toothpaste is even available in all-natural formulas and yummy flavors like chicken and vanilla.

If this is your dog's first toothbrush look for a pet dental care kit to get you started. These kits typically include a pet toothbrush, a tube of pet toothpaste and a pet finger toothbrush.

Pet dental wipes are great for use on dogs that resist brushing. These easy-to-use pet teeth cleaning pads help remove food debris and plaque, kill germs and help to control bad breath. If your dog will not allow you to use the toothbrush method try using dental wipes regularly as part of your dog's home dental care program.

You may also want to try to increase the amount of time your dog spends chewing on real bones, dental dog chew toys and edible dog chews.

This type of chewing helps remove food debris and prevents tartar build up. If your dog chews enough you may be able to reduce how often you need to manually brush your dog's teeth.

How do dog's in the wild keep their teeth clean and healthy?

Dogs in the wild are generally much more active than our domesticated pets because they must hunt for their food. They also spend much more time chewing and gnawing on fresh bones, which helps to keep their teeth clean and healthy.

Our domesticated dogs can spend a lot of time sleeping with their mouths closed while passing long periods of time alone. It is commonly believed that the lack of fresh air circulating over the teeth and gums can encourage certain types of bacterial growth in the mouth. And since our pet dogs get their daily rations served to them in bowls it isn't necessary for them to spend much time chewing. Although

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gnawing on bones is how dogs in the wild keep their teeth free from food debris, bacterial accumulation and tartar buildup, our domesticated friends rarely spend as much time at such pursuits.

Encouraging your dog to chew will make a big difference in the effectiveness of your dog dental care routine. Real bones are nature's edible dog chews. But if you prefer not to give your dog real bones there are plenty of wonderful dental dog chew toys and edible dog chews that will get the job done.

Will real bones help keep clean my dog's teeth?

Give your dog some real bones - Nature's own edible dog chews. Most people don't provide their dog with quantities of real bones, so as to avoid the mess and unsanitary residue. It's great if you have an environment in which your dog can indulge in working on a fresh bone. But if not, you can buy some natural sterilized marrowbones. These hollow bones are also available pre-filled with tasty treats like beef, chicken, cheese, and granola.

If you get some unfilled bones you may want to try filling them with your dog's favorite treats. Try peanut butter, cheese or one of the yummy pre-made fillings available at pet shops and online stores.

If you would rather not give your dog real bones there are many enticing dental dog chew toys and edible dog chews available that will encourage your dog to chew.

Besides real bones what other types of dog chews will help keep my dog's teeth clean?

Traditional chew toys are still available and are just as popular as ever. But there are also a variety of very good dental chew toys, rope bone chew toys and edible dog chews designed to keep your dog

engaged, with the added benefit of cleaning the teeth. These toys will entice your dog into playfully attending to the required dental hygiene. They can also keep your dog entertained and out of mischief during those times when you must leave your dog alone.

Rope Bone Chew Toys -

Try a dental rope chew toy for great flossing action. As your dog happily chews on these toys the rope fibers clean between the teeth. Spray on some dog dental care spray or rub on a little flavored pet toothpaste to really enhance the cleaning action of this enticing dental chew toy. Check out a pet dental care spray & rope chew toy kit and get your dog dental care routine going today.

Dental Chew Toys -

For long lasting chewing fun, and a great dental workout, get your dog a dental chew toy. Some brands are manufactured with grooves that make these dental toys real winners for cleaning your dog's teeth. Some dental chew toys can also be stuffed with your dog's favorite treats for hours of stimulating chewing. And for smaller dogs there are dental chew toys that not only have teeth cleaning grooves but also are combined with a rope chew. Just add some pet toothpaste to the dental grooves and your dogs will eagerly participate in their daily dog dental care routine.

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Edible Dog Chews -

Are you concerned about giving your dog rawhide chews because they can "ribbon" and cause your dog to choke? Many pet shops and online stores now carry a variety of composite chews. These all natural rawhide dog chews can't ribbon, are easy to digest and dogs love the baked in flavor. There is even an edible dog chew treat available that contains no animal by-products.

Dogs, like people, have different tastes and preferences. Choose whichever dental dog toy or dog chew treat that will keep your dog happily chewing his or her way to clean and healthy teeth and gums.

And remember that there are many convenient dog dental care products available that will help you to keep your dog's teeth and gums in great shape between regular visits to the vet and grooming salon. Unattended dental health problems cannot only distress your beloved pet, but can lead to serious conditions and ailments. Many of these problems can be prevented by implementing a regular home dog dental care routine.

Related Articles:

Aid in cleaning dog's teeth and promote good dog dental care. Help keep your dog's smile clean and healthy.

Help ease your puppy's teething pain with these cool puppy teething toys. As your puppy grows see why you're going to need a variety of stimulating chew toys.

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Teresa James is the Webmaster of

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care advice on a broad range of dog-related topics. Includes articles, frequently asked questions, recommendations, and tips for dog owners. Free subscription

Dental Care For Dogs

By Kirsten Hawkins

Some people don't realize that dental hygiene is as important for dogs as it is for human beings. Just like in people, dogs' teeth can gather plaque after eating. When plaque builds up and hardens it becomes a coarse brown substance called tartar. As tartar accumulates it can work its way under the gums and cause painful infections and gum disease. This goes on in the mouths of dogs just like it does in people. You brush your teeth every day, probably three times. What does your dog do?

Teeth Brushing for Doggies

Veterinarians recommend that dog owners brush their dog's teeth at least twice a week to keep the buildup of tartar at a minimum. Most pet supply stores carry specially designed toothbrushes and toothpaste just for dogs. Remember that a dog's sense of taste and smell is far more acute than that of a human and the zesty, tingly, mint taste of toothpastes for people will be extremely awful to a dog. Try brushing Rover's teeth with Crest just once and it will likely be the last time he lets you anywhere near him with a toothbrush. Use the specially designed doggie toothpaste.

Dental Chew

Some people don't have the time or patience to brush their dogs' teeth on a regular basis. If you're one of these, you'll want to care for Chopper's choppers in another way. A dog's natural tendency to chew is a built-in dental care mechanism. Dog biscuits break into small chunks when chewed and rub against the teeth, providing a cleaning service. There's no substitute for brushing your dog's teeth, but if you can't do that, make sure he gets some sort of crunchy dog biscuit on a regular basis.

Mouth Diseases in Dogs

Dogs that do not receive proper dental care and do not have access to crunchy teeth cleaning foods run the risk of several types of mouth disease. These can be as mild as gingivitis (a gum disease that results in swollen, inflamed gums) and as serious as a bacterial infection that can spread through the dog's bloodstream causing damage to vital organs. You owe it to yourself and your dog to take care of his teeth.

Doggie Dentistry

Dental services are available for dogs, just like they are for people. A dog's teeth can be filled, capped, and extracted if necessary, just like a human's. The best course of action, however, is to avoid the need for such services by properly caring for your dog's teeth. If you can avoid unnecessary pain and discomfort for your furry friend, you should do so. Preventative doggie dental care can save you money as well. Doggie dental procedures can be quite costly.

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Kirsten Hawkins is a dog lover and animal expert from Nashville, TN. Visit [for more information on dog health, the care of dogs, and dog travel.](#)

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