

Preventing Dental Disease



In Your Pet



Your pet's teeth

There are four different types of teeth which vary in size, shape, purpose, number of tooth roots and location.

INCISORS

The incisors are the smile at the front of the mouth and have a sharp biting surface.

CANINES

The canines are situated at the 'corners' between the incisors and premolars. They have the sharp, pointed surface and are sometimes considered 'the fangs'.

PREMOLARS

The premolars have a flat surface to grind food and sit behind the canines. The last upper premolar is the largest tooth and is named the carnassial.

MOLARS

The molars are the very back teeth. With a similar function they chew, crush and grind food.



Dogs and cats have two sets of teeth over their lifetime. The initial deciduous teeth, sometimes called milk or baby teeth, begin to erupt before 3 weeks of age but only last till 6 months of age.

The permanent teeth replace the deciduous teeth from 3 months and are normally all present by 6 months of age. These permanent teeth must last your pet for their entire life.

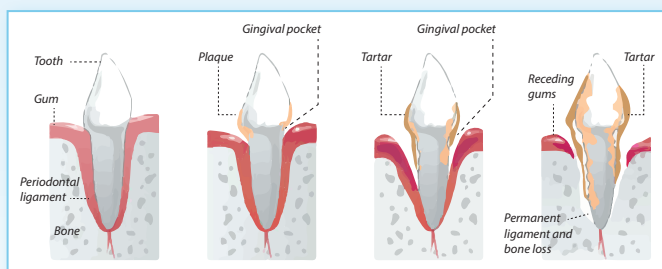
Did you know?

More than 80% of dogs and 70% of cats develop dental disease by the age of three.

Periodontal disease

Without regular care of teeth and gums to keep them healthy, disease can result in irreversible damage to the bone, gum tissue and ligaments that hold teeth in place. This is called periodontal disease and is the most common problem seen in our pets over the age of three. It is the result of a process that occurs every day that will decay, over time, the structures that hold teeth in place.

Every day a thin film known as plaque forms over the surface of the teeth. Plaque is made up of food particles, saliva and bacteria and readily sticks to the tooth surface above and below the gum line. **Plaque needs to be removed daily.** If plaque is not removed gingivitis develops, seen as reddened or inflamed and sometimes bleeding gums.



Left undisturbed, plaque eventually mineralises to form hard, solid yellow-brown deposits over the teeth (this can happen within days!). These are called calculus or tartar and are difficult to remove. Tartar provides a hiding place for bacteria, where they are protected from daily cleaning.

These bacteria multiply and the immune system within the gums must constantly work to remove this ongoing infection. This continues and develops gingivitis which becomes a painful condition. Over time, permanent damage to the supporting tissues occurs. This resulting damage leads to more areas or pockets forming where bacteria hide from daily cleaning and the cycle continues.

Cleaner teeth for better health.



What can I do to prevent dental disease?

As periodontal disease causes irreversible damage to the teeth, prevention is better than treatment. Here are a few things that can be done at home to keep your pet's teeth healthy and prevent the need for a veterinary procedure:

Brushing teeth – This will require some training but can be achieved by slowly building up your pet to accepting a brush. Do not use human toothpaste as it can irritate your pet's stomach. Instead use a flavoured pet tooth paste.

Bones – It is important to talk to your veterinarian about whether bones are appropriate and which size is suitable for your pet. When recommended the bones should always be raw and have no cut surfaces.

It is best to supervise your pet when they have a bone. Bones should encourage your pet to chew. Throw away the bone after the pet has stopped chewing, or earlier if the animal has excessively chewed the bone into pieces.

Veterinary diets – The kibble features a unique shape, texture and composition to encourage thorough chewing by your pet. Chewing provides a gentle, abrasive action on the teeth, helping to remove the bacteria that make up plaque.

Treats or toys – Need to be large and hard products to encourage your pet to chew. Use treats recommended by your vet, which remove plaque through physical rubbing and the spread of protective saliva.



Discuss with your veterinary staff to make any homecare suggestion part of a balanced diet.



Meeting your pet's needs

Your pet's good health starts with everyday dental care. Their teeth are vitally important to their wellbeing and, as they are used every day, they must be cared for daily.

Dental disease is one of the most common problems affecting cats and dogs over the age of three. Current preventative alternatives and treatment plans available from your vet can ensure that no animal need allow dental disease to become or remain a problem.

Your veterinarian is the trusted professional to meet your pet's needs. We trust that the information contained within this leaflet will help you work with your vet to help prevent dental disease to achieve that perfect smile from your pet.

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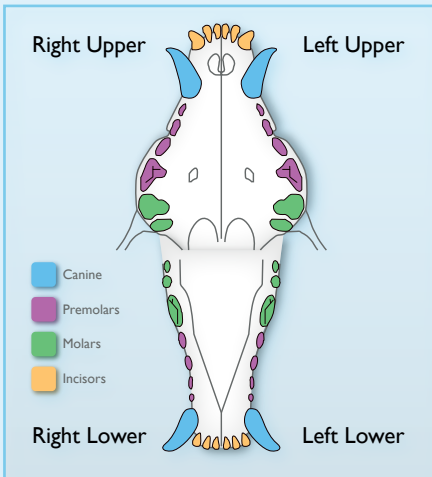


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Canine Dental Chart



Feline Dental Chart

