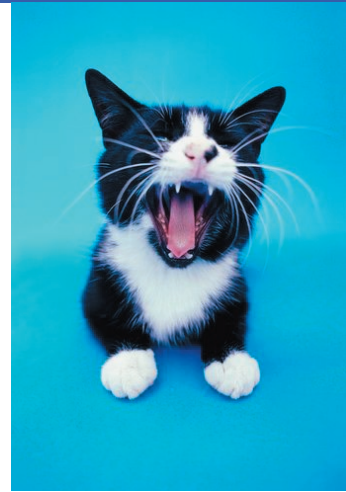




# Guide To Home Dental Care

Good nutrition and dental care are the single most important things you can do at home to keep your cat happy and healthy. Just think of what your teeth would look like if you didn't brush them every day or go to your dentist for professional cleanings! The same applies to your cat.



Plaque is a soft mixture of food, saliva, and bacteria. It sticks to teeth but is soft enough that it can be brushed away with a toothbrush. If plaque is not removed from the teeth, it mineralizes and hardens into tartar. This cannot be brushed away, and must be professionally removed. The tartar and the bacteria trapped on the teeth will infect and inflame the gumline. This is called gingivitis and is characterized by very red, swollen gums. If left untreated, the gums will recede from the base of the tooth, exposing the root and loosening the tooth. The tooth is very painful and will fall out.

This is why home dental care is so important. Your cat can't brush his teeth on his own so you must be responsible for removing the plaque from the teeth, and thereby preventing the formation of tartar and dental disease. A healthy mouth means a *very* happy cat! Here are some tips for starting your own dental routine at home. Remember, it's never too late, and your cat is never too old to start.

## *General Tips Before Starting:*

- Introduce a dental regimen gradually. It will take time for your cat to be comfortable.
- Avoid over-restraining your cat, because he will be less inclined to sit still and cooperate.
- Keep the brushing sessions very short and positive. Only a swipe or two over the outside surface of the teeth is sufficient to remove plaque. Don't worry about the inside surfaces. Your cat will lose interest and be less cooperative the longer you try to hold him.
- It's very important to praise and reassure your cat in a soothing voice throughout the entire process. Make sure your kitty is rewarded afterwards.

## *Step 1:*

- While your cat is napping or in a calm mood, gently touch around his mouth and lips with your fingers. The key is getting him used to having his mouth handled and touched. Gently touch under his upper lip and rub his long canine teeth. If he resists, stop and try it again in an hour or so.
- Each time your cat allows you to touch his mouth and teeth, praise and lavish him with positive reinforcement, like a treat.
- You'll know you've done a good job when your cat doesn't try to get away and is comfortable with having his mouth touched. You're ready for Step 2.

## *Step 2:*

- Cut a soft piece of fabric or use a gauze square to wrap around your index finger. Dip it into a yummy cat food sauce or tuna juice.
- Talk to him like he's getting a treat. Pick him up and put him in your lap, either on his back, or if he doesn't like being on his back, sitting facing you will also work.
- Gently rub his teeth and gums with your finger wrapped and soaked in tasty juice so he'll get used to the texture of having something in his mouth.
- Keep it short. Praise and reassure him the entire time. Reward him afterwards.
- When he's used to this, move to Step 3.



# Guide To Home Dental Care

## Step 3:

- Use a toothbrush specifically designed for pets. You can purchase them here at The Cat Practice in assorted colors!
- Also, you'll need to use a toothpaste or gel specifically designed for pets. Human toothpaste is not meant to be swallowed and will make your kitty sick. We have poultry and seafood flavored toothpastes that your cat will probably think of as a treat!
- Call your cat like he's getting a treat, and let him taste the toothpaste by licking it from the tube. You don't want him to be surprised with a new taste in his mouth while you're trying to brush.
- Praise and pet him. Gently put him in your lap as you did in Step 2.
- Make sure the toothbrush is wetted with water (dry and stiff bristles will irritate his delicate mouth) and put a pearl-sized amount of toothpaste on the tip of the bristles.
- Gently separate his lips with one hand and work the toothbrush in a circular motion over his front canines and incisors (upper and lower), while reassuring him. He will probably be trying to lick the toothpaste but just try to work around his flitting tongue. This is enough to start with, let him get used to the toothbrush and toothpaste before trying to get to his molars.
- Once you have him used to having his front teeth brushed, you can use your fingers to separate the rear part of his lips to expose the molars. Try to use a circular motion, and remember that it only takes a swipe or two to remove the plaque. You will probably see where there is build-up on the teeth.
- It makes it more fun for kitty if you reapply a drop of toothpaste for each portion of the mouth you brush. For example: use a drop for the right canines and incisors, for the left canines and incisors, for the right molars, and for the left molars (making sure you are brushing both the upper and lower teeth).

Once again, keep the sessions short, positive, and fun with a treat afterwards. You'll find that it can be a positive bonding experience for both of you. But even more importantly, you'll be keeping your kitty stay healthy and happy.

*For demonstration of any techniques, or to be shown our different dental products, including dental food and treats, ask any one of the hospital staff. We will be happy to help!*

❁ **A SAMPLE DENTAL CHART** ❁

**FELINE DENTAL CHART**

Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Pet Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M / N; F / S Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Referring Veterinarian: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Presenting Complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

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**MEDICAL ALERT:**  
 History/Signs: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Diagnosis: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Treatment(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Prophy/Polish/Fluoride: (\_\_\_ Routine) (\_\_\_ Extended)  
 Perio/Root planing/Curettage/Packing: \_\_\_\_\_  
 X-rays: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Comments/Recommendations (\_\_\_ See Handout): \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Antibiotics dispensed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pain medication: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Diet: (\_\_\_) (\_\_\_ Routine) (\_\_\_ Rx TD)  
 (\_\_\_ Soft - 24-48 hours) (\_\_\_ Soft - exclusively for \_\_\_\_\_)

Chew Toys: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home care - brushing: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Solutions/gels: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rechecks: (\_\_\_ if problems arise) (\_\_\_ in \_\_\_ days) (\_\_\_ in \_\_\_ months)

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**ABBREVIATION KEY:**

AL - Attachment loss	OM - Oral Mass
AT - Attrition	ONF - Oronasal fistula
CI - Calculus Index	PC - Pulp capping
CA - Caries	PE - Pulp exposure
CR - Crown	PI - Plaque index
CU - Contact ulcer	PP - Periodontal pocket
CWD - Crowding	PU - Pulpitis
ED - Enamel defect	R/C - Restorative - composite
EP - Epulis	R/I - Restorative - ionomer
FE - Furcation Exposure	RC - Root canal
FX - Fracture	RD - Retained deciduous
GH - Gingival Hyperplasia	RE - Root exposure
GI - Gingivitis Index	RL - Resorptive lesion
GR - Gingival Recession	ROT - Retained Root
GV/GVP - Gingivectomy/plasty	RPC - Root planing, closed
LPS - Lymphocytic/Plasmacytic Stomatitis	RPO - Root planing, open
LX - Laceration	RTR - Retained Root
M - Mobile tooth	YP - Vial Palpatomy
O - Missing tooth (circled)	X - Extraction
OA - Orthodontic appliance	X/S - Extraction, sectioned
OD - Odontopasty	XSS - Extraction, surgical

Maxilla  
Mandible