

# Dental Care FAQs

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## What is plaque and how is it detrimental to my pet?

Plaque is the build-up of bacteria, saliva, and food on your pet's teeth. It becomes a problem if it mineralizes, forming tartar, which is a hard coating that builds up on the teeth and under the gums. The gums become inflamed, which is called gingivitis. Tartar can separate the gums from the teeth to form "pockets" and encourage even more bacterial growth, leading to irreversible periodontal disease.

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## I've never brushed my dog's teeth before and would like to start. How do I begin?

Start slowly, working your way up to brushing by first getting your dog used to you handling his mouth. Before you start, we highly recommend you read [Give Your Dog the Home Dental Care it Needs](#), which provides step-by-step tooth-brushing tips. If you take things slowly at the beginning and give lots of praise, you and your dog will start looking forward to your brushing sessions!

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## Can I use human toothpaste on my pet?

Make sure you use a pet-formulated toothpaste - human toothpaste can upset your dog's stomach or even make her ill. Various veterinarians have recommended a pet toothpaste that contains chlorhexidine or hexametaphosphate. The best pet toothpaste would contain both.

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## Are there other options to using pet toothpaste for brushing?

In addition to toothpaste, various gels and rinses are available that contain the same bacteria and plaque-fighting properties. Products such as [Dental Cleanser Solution](#) can be applied to your pet's teeth with a toothbrush, a finger toothbrush, a dental sponge, or a cotton ball.

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## What kind of toothbrush should I use on my pet?

Use [toothbrushes](#) designed specifically for pets - they are smaller, ultra-soft, and have a somewhat different shape. It is not a good idea to use a human brush on a dog, as they may be too hard for your dog's gums.

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## How often should I brush my pet's teeth?

Ask yourself this question: how long would you go without brushing your teeth? Bacteria and food build up on your pet's teeth just as they do on yours. We recommend daily brushing of your pet's teeth, so build-up doesn't have a chance to harden. If you're short on time, a quick wipe with a [Dental Clens Pad](#) will help prevent plaque formation between brushings.

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## Is there more I can do for my pet's dental health besides brushing?

Yes, we recommend that you first feed your pet a nutritionally-balanced, [dry kibble food](#) as his primary diet. Dry kibble also helps scrape off plaque. In addition, provide toys or [treats](#) that help with the mechanical removal of plaque and with massaging your pet's gums. Plus, a good dental care program also includes regular visits to the veterinarian for an oral exam and cleanings as advised.

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## What kinds of toys help remove plaque?

Plaque removal can be accomplished by using toys such as [Plaque Attacker Dental Chews](#), [rope toys](#), or [Greenies® Dog](#).

[Treats](#). We recommend you supervise your dog when he is chewing on bones or chew toys that can break apart, and be sure to remove any small, broken pieces.

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#### **What can I do about bad breath problems in my pet?**

For a pet with occasional problems, you can freshen your pet's mouth with quick-acting [Fresh Breath Tablets](#), or with a convenient [Dental Clens Pad](#).

All of these contain ingredients that leave your pet's mouth minty fresh AND work to reduce the odor-causing bacteria inside her mouth. Some pets have chronic bad breath that stems from digestive problems. You may want to try [Acidophilus+](#), in addition to the items mentioned above. Acidophilus+ works from the inside out, containing "good" bacteria to help your pet properly digest his food and produce less gas which could make its way up to her mouth. [Pet Kiss](#) is a pure blend of 100% all natural parsley seed and sunflower oils that you squeeze onto your pet's food. It works to neutralize both the odors in your pet's mouth and those in her digestive system, keeping odors at bay for hours.

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