Home Dental Care Guide

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Give Your Dog the Home Dental Care He Needs
Follow this Step-by-Step Program

The necessity of oral care
Regular oral hygiene is a necessity for dogs, but is often neglected or entirely overlooked by many owners. Even conscientious owners who arrange for annual, semi-annual, or more frequent cleanings by their veterinarian discover that this regimen will not prevent every problem. The reason is simple. Each time your dog eats, plaque forms around its teeth. In one to three days, the plaque hardens into tartar that irritates gums, and opens the door to painful and damaging diseases. Regular cleaning is needed to prevent tarter build-up and dental problems.

Poor or neglected dental care opens the door to a number of offensive, painful, and escalating problems for your dog, including bad breath, and tooth and gum diseases. More serious problems can result in tooth loss, and even diseases affecting the entire body. In fact, teeth and gum problems are among the most commonly diagnosed in dogs over three years of age. By putting off home care now, you may learn a difficult lesson later… preventive care is far less expensive than remedial care.

Fortunately, in recent years, the news about the importance of regular dental care has been getting around. We are thrilled to see more and more owners are taking care of their dog's teeth and gums, and hope it will soon become a universal practice. Don't wait until your pet has an oral problem, start your pet on a regular, routine dental program today.

Home dental care is easy
Home dental care is neither expensive nor difficult. All you need are the right tools and the desire to succeed. Below we have provided a short list of quality items we know to be effective, and recommended steps to help you and your dog become accustomed to routine care.

Dental care is an activity best learned in small steps, repeated regularly - daily if possible - until your dog is ready to move from one step to the next. During the training period, and later during regular cleaning sessions, use a relaxing, upbeat tone of voice. At the conclusion of each session, provide a treat. Your attitude, and rewards, will make dental care an activity your dog anticipates and enjoys.

Effective dental care tools
To avoid delays in training, assemble all of the items you will need in advance. We offer a range of products for all sizes and types of dog. Many customers find that our Dental Care System contains everything they need to get started.

- Toothpaste - Tarter control or baking soda formula.
- Dental Clens Solution - Easy-to-apply, chlorhexidrine solution kills bacteria that lead to plaque and gum disease.
- Toothbrushes - Select a soft nylon toothbrush, designed especially for dogs, sized properly for your pet. Consider a finger toothbrush if your dog proves to be brush-fussy.
- Dental Treats and Toys - A selection of products are designed to provide dental benefits, including Greenies®, a tasty, nutritious chew formulated to clean stubborn tarter and plaque off of teeth.

Home care cleaning… a step at a time
Some dogs will become accustomed to cleaning procedures almost immediately; others will require several days, or even weeks. Your pet will determine how fast you can move through the following recommended steps:

Days 1-4: First, your dog needs to become comfortable with you working in its mouth. Hold your dog's muzzle with one hand and gently stroke the muzzle with the other. Then, slowly lift the upper lip, exposing the teeth. Do this for short intervals for a number of days.

Days 5-8: Next, accustom your dog to new tastes. Dip your finger in a beef broth, and allow your dog to lick some from your finger, and then work it lightly over his teeth and gums. Repeat this procedure for 15 to 30 seconds for 3-5 days, and then substitute dental solution or toothpaste specially formulated for dogs.

Days 8-14: Now, it's time to condition your dog to actual cleaning. Wrap your finger in gauze, soak it in dental solution or paste, and gently rub your dog's teeth in a circular motion. For this step, you can also use convenient dental pads or a dental sponge.

Day 14+: In about two weeks, your dog will be ready for brushing. Allow your dog to sample the toothpaste from your finger and brush. Apply more to his gum

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line and work it around. Now, apply toothpaste to the brush. Hold your dog's head gently; angle the brush at 45 degrees to the gum line and brush in a circular motion. Start on one side from the front canine tooth, working to the back of the mouth. Concentrate on the outside of the teeth, top row, and then bottom row. Repeat on the other side.

Because your dog may grow impatient, it may be necessary to start with a few front teeth, and add teeth over time. Soon you will be brushing his entire mouth. If you miss a day or two, don't worry, just begin again. Your commitment to regularly cleaning is vital.

Remember, at the conclusion of each step above, reward your dog's cooperation with a treat.

Brushing is not a big chore. Once your routine is established, it should take only a couple of minutes each day. Many owners find the most convenient time is immediately after their own morning brushing.

Tips for keeping teeth healthy
Some dogs prove sensitive to any brush, but this is no reason to avoid dental care. A fussy dog may find a finger-fitted brush more agreeable. If not, soft prepared pads and sponges will do a good job. It is also wise to keep a supply of dental pads handy for quick clean ups, or for on-the-fly cleaning.

The type of food you provide will make a difference. Regular feeding of dry, kibble-type food will help prevent the formation of plaque. Hard biscuits, rawhide, or hard chew toys are good plaque attackers. We also offer a complete line of dental treats that help remove plaque, message gums, and freshen breath.

Have your veterinarian give a thorough oral exam with your pet's regular checkups. And consult with your veterinarian any time you see signs that you suspect are a dental problem, like red, swollen gums, pain or bleeding when you touch the gums or mouth, or even a change in breath odor. With regular check-ups and routine home care, you will keep your dog's teeth healthy. It is never too late to start.

Training Steps

1. Accustom your dog to working in its mouth.
2. Introduce broth; then later dental solution or paste on your finger.
3. Rub teeth and gums with dental solution or paste; or use prepared pads or sponges.
4. Introduce toothbrush or use a finger-fitted toothbrush.
5. Reward your dog! Make brushing fun!
6. Keep a supply of pads handy for on-the-fly dental care

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