Dental Care: Brushing Your Dog's Teeth

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Dental disease is the most common problem we see as veterinarians. Studies show that even by age three, 80% of dogs exhibit signs of dental disease.

The problem starts when plaque, a combination of bacteria and food debris, starts to accumulate on teeth. Very soon the plaque becomes mineralized and turns into a hard adhesive material called tartar. Tartar, especially when it accumulates below the gum line, starts to cause damage to the gums, eventually leading to gum erosion and loosening of the teeth.

Since plaque starts to form on teeth within days of being born, it is essential that puppies be started on a good oral hygiene program. We think a toothbrush and pet toothpaste should be a part of every puppy kit. There's nothing like the mechanical action of a brush combined with a pet toothpaste. We recommend daily brushing, as do board-certified veterinary dentists. Pick a time to do it each day – right before you go to bed, after your dog's morning meal, or whenever works best for you. Just stick with it.

If you haven't brushed your dog's teeth before, have them checked by your veterinarian. You may need to have them professionally cleaned first to remove the tartar. Brushing can't remove tartar, and brushing teeth when there is accumulated tartar and inflamed gums can be painful for your dog, causing bleeding of the gums, which allows bacteria to enter the blood stream and go to other organs where they can cause damage.

Brushing isn't hard if you have the right tools. For small dogs and cats, we recommend the finger toothbrushes. For larger dogs, a pet toothbrush will help you reach those harder to get to back teeth. Make sure you use a pet toothpaste –

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human toothpastes are not designed to be swallowed. Pet toothpastes are. We especially like our enzymatic toothpastes. Choose from the regular, or the Tartar Control if your dog is more prone to developing tartar.

You can complement your toothbrushing with dental treats and toys and use dental rinses like our Dental Cleanser to decrease the bacteria level in the mouth.

Q & A	Dental Care Solutions
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 his mouth being handled. See our online video "How to clean your dog's teeth" for step-by-step toothbrushing 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. (watch video) **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.	**Dental care does not have to be difficult. We recommend three core steps that, when performed regularly, will do the most to ensure your dog's good oral health.** **1.** Brush your dog's teeth regularly with a toothpaste specially made for dogs **2.** If you cannot brush, use a bacteria-killing dental solution or use a dental cleaning pad daily **3.** Offer your dog teeth-cleaning toys, rawhide, and treats

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