

**D**ogs and cats don't often get cavities. But they do frequently suffer from other types of dental disease.

Periodontal or gum disease, in fact, is the number one illness found in both dogs and cats.



## What you need to know about dental care for your pet:

- Dental disease can cause serious problems for your pet, ranging from gum inflammation and tooth loss to infection and even organ damage.
- Up to 80% of dogs and 70% of cats that don't receive proper dental care will develop signs of dental disease by the age of three.
- Dental disease can be easily prevented by following your veterinarian's advice regarding dental examinations, home care, and dental cleanings.

## Q & A

### What should I do about broken teeth?

Broken teeth can be extremely painful for pets and can lead to chronic infection, abscess formation, and loss of secondary teeth. Immediate treatment is vital. Performing a root canal will save what's left of the broken tooth and prevent it from being reinfected. Where root canal is not an option, the tooth should be extracted.

### I'm not sure I can afford dental cleanings every year.

While dental cleanings may seem like an added expense, they're actually a very cost effective investment in your pet's health. Caught early, dental problems are easy to treat. Neglected, they can turn into serious, costly, and painful problems.

### Does my pet need to be anesthetized during cleanings?

Yes. Unlike with human patients, we can't explain to your pet what's happening and why. For that reason, we need to anesthetize pets in order to access the entire mouth and gums and perform the necessary work thoroughly and safely. Your veterinarian will recommend preanesthetic testing to make sure there are no hidden health problems that could affect your pet's ability to undergo the procedure.

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## Dental Care For Your Pet

How to keep that healthy smile!



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# Dental Care For Your Pet

## Prevention is the best answer

While the damage caused by periodontal disease is sometimes irreversible, it can be halted with antibiotics and regular cleaning. The wisest solution is to stop the disease before it starts.

### Annual cleanings

Beginning at age one, your pet should have an annual dental examination and cleaning performed by your veterinarian. A thorough cleaning removes plaque and tartar both above and below the gum line.

This proactive treatment is aimed at maintaining the natural oral defenses so that periodontal disease and other dental problems have a harder time becoming established.

A good home care program can tremendously extend the positive effects of the professional cleaning.

### Brushing

The best form of oral home care is daily brushing with a soft toothbrush. There is no better way of removing the disease-causing dental plaque. Your veterinarian can show you how to do it, and provide special brushes, toothpastes, and oral gels specifically for pets.

### Dental diets

Dry food is generally better than canned for tooth health. However, you'll get the best results with

## The dangers of periodontal disease

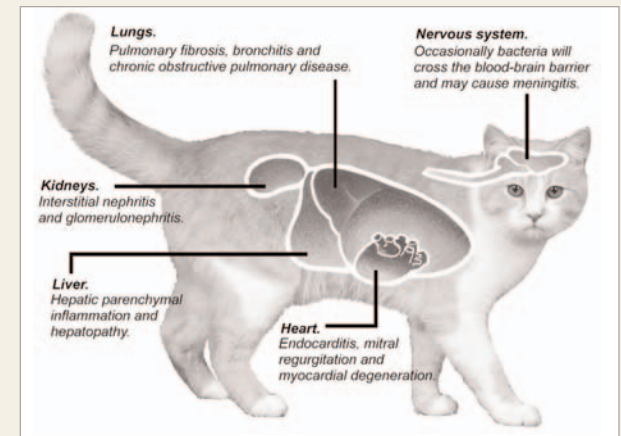
Without proper dental care, your pet will most likely suffer from bad breath, inflamed gums, missing, loose, or broken teeth, and all of the pain and discomfort such problems can cause. Dental disease can also lead to systemic health problems in dogs and cats.

The good news, however, is that dental disease is easily prevented by regular dental examinations, home care, and dental cleanings.

### What is periodontal disease?

Periodontal disease is an infection caused by the bacteria found in dental plaque. It often begins with discoloration on the teeth. Without regular dental cleanings, this plaque builds up and turns into tartar. Tartar can dig into the gums, where bacteria can become trapped and cause infections.

If left unchecked, periodontal disease can lead to serious pain, infection, and tooth loss. The infection can also result in bacteria entering the bloodstream and damaging other organs or body systems in your pet. It can also complicate other underlying diseases, such as diabetes or chronic sinusitis.



*Poor dental health can affect your pet's entire body.*

### Signs of poor dental health

- Bad breath
- Visible tartar on the teeth
- Swelling under the eyes
- Loose or missing teeth
- Difficulty eating
- Discharge from the nose
- Drooling or excessive salivation
- Pawing at the teeth or mouth
- Discoloration or staining of the teeth
- Red, irritated, swollen, or bleeding gums
- Weight loss or loss of appetite
- Lethargy and loss of vitality

pecially formulated foods that have been proven effective in combating plaque and tartar buildup. Ask your veterinarian for recommendations.

### Chew bones

For dogs, bones can play a big role in keeping teeth and gums clean. Make sure you avoid cooked bones, as they could splinter and become a health hazard if swallowed.

### VCA Pet Tips:

- 1 Older or ill pets may need dental cleanings more frequently than once a year.
- 2 Smaller breeds of dogs seem to be particularly bothered by dental disease.
- 3 Dental problems can cause loss of appetite and weight loss, especially in older pets.