

Dental Care for Your Pet

Did you know:

- Over **85% of dogs and cats** over the age of four suffer from **periodontal disease**. This can be prevented with daily dental care.
- Dogs and cats accumulate plaque **five times faster** than humans. Imagine going five days without brushing your teeth. That is what is happening inside your pet's mouth on a daily basis.
- One milligram of dental plaque contains over **one trillion bacteria**.
- Left untreated, periodontal disease can result in bad breath, oral pain, tooth loss and damage to other organ systems including the heart, liver and kidneys.
- Tooth brushing can extend the life of a pet by **two to six years**.

We strongly recommend that you brush your pet's teeth on a regular basis, daily is best. Always **use toothpaste and a toothbrush designed for pets**. Human toothpaste is flavored for human tastes, is too foamy and is not meant to be swallowed due to the high level of fluoride which can cause stomach upset and can even be toxic to pets.

To begin brushing:

1. Begin gradually. On Day 1 all you need to do is get your puppy or kitten to taste the toothpaste. Use an excited voice and "pump them up" for their tooth brushing experience. It should be FUN and yummy. After they have tasted the toothpaste (if they don't voluntarily lick the toothpaste off your finger then bump their mouth with dentifrice) 99% of them like the taste once they have experienced it. After they lick the toothpaste, PRAISE them. Remember, it needs to be a positive experience.
2. On Day 2 start to rub the incisors with your finger coated with toothpaste. Each day massage more of the teeth and gums. Don't forget to get them excited for their dental care and praise them afterward.
3. Once they allow your finger in their mouth, you can graduate to the fingerbrush. Don't forget to PRAISE them.
4. Finally they can graduate to the dog or cat toothbrushes. The fingerbrush is a good beginner tool, but they should step up to the regular toothbrush as it has a more abrasive surface.
5. Choose the same time each day (like in the morning or evening when you brush your own teeth). It should become part of your pet's daily habit. Many pets come running when they know it's time for the dental "treat."

Finally:

- Many people think they don't need to brush their pet's teeth because they have regular dentals done on their pets. Imagine going to your own dentist and having your teeth cleaned, then not brushing for the next six to twelve months because you'll just get them cleaned again.
- Some pet owners are tempted to scale their pet's teeth with dental tools that they have at home. This is NOT recommended. The metal dental scaling tools create scratches in the tooth's protective enamel layer. These scratches increase the surface area of the tooth. Consequently bacteria are able to attach and proliferate more easily.

If you ever have questions regarding any of the above information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Visit us online at www.WhiteBearAnimalHospital.com.