

# Tips for Keeping Your Dog's Teeth Clean & Healthy

Believe it or not, taking care of your dog's teeth is as important as taking care of your own. Research has shown that nearly two-thirds of dog owners do not provide the veterinarian-recommended guidelines for dog dental care. Periodontal disease is the most common clinical condition in adult dogs, and most dogs have some form of the disease by the time they turn 3 years old.

## Start early with your dog as a puppy!

Grown dogs can learn to become comfortable with dog teeth cleaning, but make things easier for yourself by working with your dog as a puppy.

Your dog might not go for the tooth brushing at first, but hopefully, you can make it a reasonably pleasant experience for both of you. Try and choose a time when your dog has had a decent amount of exercise, so he's more inclined to sit still for the procedure. Don't overdo it the first few times. Start slowly and quit if your dog gets agitated, even if you don't brush the whole mouth. You can increase the time every day as he gets used to it. Also, make sure to speak soothingly and pleasantly during the brushing and reward your dog with a treat afterwards. Before too long, your dog should start looking forward to the event.

## How to Brush a Dog's Teeth at Home

The gold standard for dog oral care at home is brushing.

- Get your dog used to the idea of having his teeth brushed. Keep the sessions short and positive. Dip your finger in beef stock or similar treat and massage his lips in a circular motion for 30 to 60 seconds once or twice a day for a few weeks, and then move on to the teeth and gums for a few weeks. Patience is key.
- Wrap your finger in gauze or place a toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the teeth and clean in small, circular motions, lifting your dog's lip if necessary. Because the side of the tooth that touches the cheek contains the most tartar, concentrate there.

- When you're almost finished, brush vertically toward the inside of the mouth to clear any plaque you've dislodged.
- Use a brush designed especially for dogs; it's smaller than a human toothbrush and has softer bristles. Toothbrushes that you can wear over your finger are also available.
- Use toothpaste designed for dogs such as Virbac's Enzymatic toothpaste. Using human toothpaste can cause distress and upset your dog's stomach.
- Chew toys - There are lots of toys on the market designed to encourage your dog to chew. Dental chew toys with lots of variety in texture can help scrape the plaque off your dog's teeth as they relax and enjoy their primal instinct to chew. Your dog should always be supervised when playing with chew toys to make sure they don't swallow any large pieces.



- Dental wipes – a good alternative to toothbrushes if your pet does not tolerate brushing.



- Water additives – such as Oxyfresh dental care or Healthy mouth.

#### **Develop a Regular Cleaning Routine**

Consistency is key. Brush your dog's teeth at least 2 to 3 times a week. Once a day brushing is ideal. The better you are at keeping a regular routine, the easier it will be on your dog and the more likely he or she will start to respond positively to you brushing their teeth.