



Homecare guidelines for maintenance of oral health for dogs and cats

1. Brush the teeth on a daily basis.

- Use a soft bristled pediatric (human) tooth brush, or alternatively a “pet” finger brush. The standard human child’s tooth brush is softer and gets into the interdental spaces more effectively than the coarser pet brushes.
- Use any pet-safe toothpaste that they enjoy and would lick from your finger.
- If you are just starting to brush, then begin by simply using your finger and slowly working into using the brush, as you both become more comfortable with the process.
- It may be helpful to brush the teeth from behind your pet (holding them between your legs or on your lap, both facing in the same direction), especially if you are alone, as this makes it easier to hold them still.
- You can brush their teeth by inserting the brush between the lips, while holding the nose and mouth closed with your other hand, and brushing along the gum-lines on the cheek side of the teeth (not the tongue side). Dogs and cats have scissor bites (unlike our bite), so brushing with the mouth closed will essentially clean the top and bottom teeth at the same time.

2. Offer a kibble diet, at least in part, such as Hill’s T/D or Science Diet's Oral Care. You may have to try several different brands before finding one your pet will enjoy. Larger sized kibble has been shown to help decrease plaque and tartar.

3. Give a daily oral chew, such as Oravet, CET rawhide or Veggie dent chews, Greenies, Milk bone oral chews, or Tartar Shield extruded rawhide chews. These should be chewed on for at least 3-5 minutes, under supervision, before being ingested. Cats have a much more limited selection of chews (for example, CET and Greenies).

4. Use “*Dog::Essentials Healthy Mouth*” water additive with every water change also. These are also available for cats.

5. Please visit the website www.VOHC.org for a list of products that research has shown to help reduce plaque and tartar accumulation and help control periodontal disease.

6. Oral exams depend on the individual pet, however a basic recommendation is to have a check-up every 12 months to see how the oral health is progressing, or sooner if you perceive a worsening of breath or repeated areas of discomfort/bleeding while brushing.

7. Prophylactic cleaning and evaluations are generally recommended every 12-24 months.