



Timpanogos  
animal hospital

# CARING FOR YOUR PET'S TEETH

“Good to chew, better to rinse, best to brush.” - C.E.T.

## **PETS NEED DENTAL CARE TOO?**

Dental disease is one of the most common problems seen in our pet population today. Over 85% of all dogs and cats presented to veterinarians are affected by dental problems. This is especially true of the smaller breeds. Periodontal disease causes bad breath, drooling, painful and inflamed gums, and even the destruction of the bone supporting the teeth, resulting in TOOTH LOSS.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO KEEP MY PET'S TEETH HEALTHY?**

There are various ways to help maintain your pet's teeth. The most effective method is by brushing their teeth. However, using rinses and oral care diets can also be beneficial. Toys and chews are available to aid in home dental care and using a combination of methods may optimize results.

## **HOW DO I BRUSH MY PET'S TEETH?**

Brushing is by far the most effective means of preventing periodontal disease. It is a good idea to begin a brushing routine with your pet when they are 8-12 weeks of age. However, it is never too late to begin! Even older pets, with the appropriate approach, will accept brushing.

### ***INTRODUCING YOUR PET TO BRUSHING***

1. The first step is to work with your pet's mouth. With a little patience, your pet will soon accept your attention. Make it fun for both of you. Use a lot of love and praise to gain their confidence. Start by handling the mouth, and then rub the teeth and gums gently with your finger. Give treats or try a few drops of water flavored with garlic powder. Your pet will soon look forward to this treat.
2. Now, try using a soft washcloth to rub your pet's teeth. When your pet is used to this, you can try brushing with a brush.
3. Use a soft toothbrush to brush all of the teeth. To begin with, try the water from a tuna fish can (this might taste good) or some plain water. Scrub gently with either a fingerbrush (a device that fits over your finger) or a soft-bristled pet or baby toothbrush. It is normal for your pet to swallow any liquids or paste that you put in their mouths- do not use human toothpaste, because they will swallow it and may get sick from the fluoride. Brushing the inside of the teeth is not necessary.
4. Once your pet is comfortable with brushing, you should use a pet toothpaste. Brushing daily yields the best results, but brushing at least 3 times weekly would make it worth your while.

## **WHAT IF MY PET WILL NOT ALLOW BRUSHING?**

While brushing your pet's teeth is the most effective way to keep their teeth healthy, it is not the only way. Oral rinses (like mouthwash) stop plaque formation before it starts and have components to keep breath fresh and clean. They come with a curved tip so daily application is easy. Some rinses are available as water additives, so you simply add a capful to your pet's water daily. For cats or finicky dogs, Maxi/Guard Gel may be the best option because it is taste-free! Simply apply a pea-sized amount directly to your pet's clean teeth daily.

## **DOES THE FOOD THAT I FEED MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

A diet formulated specifically for oral care can really help your pet's mouth. Science Diet has produced a specially designed diet that can assist in the plaque removal process. This diet is called Prescription Diet t/d, and is available at most veterinary offices.

The fibers in the t/d kibbles are aligned parallel to each other through a patented process. This allows the teeth to penetrate deep into the kibble, which abrades the surfaces of the teeth. Traditional dry foods "explode" during the

chewing process and don't really abrade the teeth. The t/d kibbles are made especially large (there is also a formula made for smaller dogs) in order to encourage active chewing of the food.