



**Middlesex Veterinary Center
31 Stevens Street
Littleton MA 01460**



HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR PET'S TEETH

The best defense against plaque is regular brushing at home in combination with professional scaling and polishing.

Your veterinarian is your pet's dentist as well as medical doctor. Ask your veterinarian, if you have any questions about the health of your pet's mouth. We recommend that the teeth be cleaned and polished. Scaling removes the plaque and tartar buildup. Modern veterinary dentistry allows us to safely anesthetize your pet to clean the teeth. Depending upon your ability to brush the teeth, your pet may need its teeth professionally cleaned every six months to one year.

To brush your pet's teeth, do so gradually over several weeks. Small dogs and cats are most easily done on a table or counter; larger dogs can sit on the floor. One person may need to hold the dog and someone else may have to actually do the brushing. Make it fun!

WEEK 1

Start by just looking at the teeth. Do this once a day. Pull the lips back from the front of the muzzle and check the long, canine teeth, and then pull your finger back towards the corners along the gums. Do the same for the other side of the mouth and the front incisor teeth. This takes about 30 seconds. Be sure to praise your pet as you do this, and give him a treat or a favorite toy at the end.

WEEK 2

Now, once daily, play with your pet's mouth with a toothbrush using the same rubbing motion as with your finger.

WEEK 3

This week, use toothpaste. Ask us for a recommendation for the type to use. There are gels, solutions, and sprays on the market specifically for use with pets. Human toothpaste, salt, or baking soda should NOT be used. Human toothpaste has detergent in it that foams and may cause gastric upset if swallowed. Salt and baking soda are not as effective as modern toothpaste in removing plaque and their sodium content may be dangerous in elderly pets with heart problems.

It is important to do this daily. Once or twice a week, or once monthly, does not remove plaque often enough to prevent gingivitis and periodontal disease. Remember, plaque builds up again 6-8 hours after brushing! Also, pets respond to regular routine. If done daily, most will actually enjoy the attention. If done less frequently, they will fight and resent the procedure.

Good luck and happy brushing!