



## Brushing your pet's teeth

The best thing you can do to promote good oral health is brush your pet's teeth. This can help keep their mouths healthy and delay the time your pet will need a dental procedure, thus saving you money as well!

Brushing teeth does not have to be stressful for you or your furry friend if you start young and make it a positive experience. Use a lot of positive reinforcement and start with short brushing sessions.

Use a pet specific toothpaste – with a delicious flavor, such as poultry- and start by letting them lick it off the toothbrush. Immediately reward them with a treat, toy, or nice interaction. As your pet allows, begin to put the brush in their mouth and then start to move it around in circular motions, focusing specifically at the gum line. Spend a few minutes each day to encourage brushing and increase the time as your pet tolerates, and even begins to enjoy your tooth brushing sessions. Your goal is to get 15 seconds on each side and across the front. You do not need to worry about brushing the insides of the teeth as your pet will likely not tolerate this well and pathology does not often occur there.

There are many different types of toothbrushes you can use from a soft child brush, finger brushes or even a nylon stocking or terrycloth dishcloth that has some friction when rubbed against the tooth. Choose whatever works best for you and your pet.

While brushing daily is the gold standard, don't stop just because you find you are not able to brush every day. Even brushing every 2-3 days is very beneficial. If you find you are not able to brush at all there are other options that can be helpful. Many chews are available for purchase that can benefit dental health. Make sure you are purchasing at a reputable place and that the product carries the "Seal of Acceptance" for the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC). This will let you know the product has been evaluated by veterinarians and shown to truly benefit oral health.

Your pet's mouth and teeth will be assessed and graded at their annual exam and we will discuss with you when a dental procedure, done under general anesthesia is recommended. These are very important to their overall health as dental disease allows bacteria to be released into the blood stream and can cause damage to major organs. Dental disease can also be painful and our pets tend to hide their pain and discomfort from us. If you ever have any questions regarding brushing or dental procedures, please don't hesitate to ask your veterinary team. We are always ready to discuss dental health!