

Dental Care for Cats

Believe it or not, taking care of your cat's teeth is as important as looking after your own. Proper **dental care for cats** is therefore critical for their overall health.

Plaque and Tartar

Saliva, bacteria and food particles combine to form plaque every day. Plaque is the film you feel on your teeth in the morning when you wake up. Within 24 hours the plaque may begin to turn into tartar, a hard yellowish deposit on the teeth. Plaque can also cause gingivitis – an infection of the gum - that is the first stage of periodontal disease.

A problem at all ages

70% of cats have periodontal disease by the age of two, but other types of gum disease can occur even earlier. A major cause of gum disease is accumulation of plaque. Periodontal disease is painful, even if your cat may not show it.

Tell-tale signs

Your vet will be able to spot any problems during your cat's annual check-up, but until then, here are some things to look out for:

- Bad breath
- Yellow and brown tartar deposits on the teeth – normal teeth should always be white
- A red line along the gum line (gingivitis)
- Difficulty eating
- Bleeding gums

A good brush

There are 3 parts to taking care of your cat's teeth:

- 1) Regular tooth brushing,
- 2) A special food that works like a toothbrush
- 3) Regular check-ups with your vet – every 6 months or AT LEAST once a year

Brushing will be easier if you begin while your cat is still young, although you may have success even if you start with an older cat, provided she doesn't already have painful gum disease.

Don't use toothpaste designed for people, there are pastes specially designed for pets. Ask your veterinarian or veterinary technician what they would recommend and get them to show you what to do.

You should brush your cat's teeth at least once a week, but once a day is best.

Special food with dental benefits.

In addition to tooth brushing or instead of it, you can use a special food.