

Do Your Pets Brush Their Teeth?



What would happen if you stopped brushing your teeth?

If hard food and bones keep teeth clean, you and your dogs wouldn't need a dentist. The problem is it doesn't work! You should be brushing your dog's teeth at least three times weekly and daily brushing is optimal. It's not as difficult as you might imagine. Try it, you both will like it!

What are the benefits of tooth brushing?

Brushing removes plaque from the teeth. Dogs do get cavities and suffer from periodontal disease. If untreated, the gum disease can lead to unnecessary pain and loss of teeth. Let's be proactive with teeth cleaning and brushing!

How do we brush teeth? Which teeth do we Brush?

Brush only the teeth you want to save!

Step one is to pick an appropriate toothbrush. Many options are available. The ideal dog toothbrush will fit in your hand and your pet's mouth. Soft bristles are helpful. Battery operated rotating toothbrushes may be ideal. Try them out!

Step two is to select appropriate toothpaste. The best pet toothpastes contain enzymes that help control plaque. Avoid human toothpastes. Avoid products with baking soda, detergents, or salt. Fluoride may be incorporated to help control bacteria and tooth sensitivity. Human's brush and rinse, dogs typically swallow. Ingestion of human tooth-

pastes can be harmful for pets. Apply the paste between the bristles before brushing. This allows optimal contact.

Step three is to get the brush with paste into your dog's mouth and to brush all the teeth. Most pets accept brushing if they are approached in a loving manner. Starting with young pets is fun. *You can teach old dogs new tricks* (brushing)! Start slowly; use a cloth or gauze to gently wipe the teeth. Later you will be using the toothbrush. Do this twice daily for about two weeks and your pet should become very comfortable. Then take the pet toothbrush, soak it in warm water and start brushing daily for several days. Adding toothpaste improves acceptance of brushing.

The toothbrush bristles should be placed at the gum margin where the teeth and gums meet at a 45 degree angle. The brushing should be in an oval pattern. Be sure to gently brush the area of the gum margin as well as the space between the teeth. Six back-and-forth motions are to be completed, before moving to a new location. Cover two to four teeth at a time. Most attention should focus on the outside of the upper teeth. Brush for 30 seconds in four areas; the upper and lower teeth on both sides. Brushing the tongue side is not necessary!

In summary, small animal dental home care should include daily (or at least every other day) brushing, using an enzymatic pet toothpaste. Taking an active role in the care of your dog's dental care will help reduce dental disease, bad breath and potential life threatening heart and kidney disease. The effort in teeth brushing is very rewarding!



For more information, contact Dr. Dale Kressin, Veterinary Dentist (Diplomate AVDC)
1-888-598-6684 or 920-233-8409