



## **Brushed Your Pet's Teeth Lately?**

Can you imagine what your teeth would be like if you didn't brush them for a year? Talk about bad breath! Considering your pet can't brush his own teeth, this is kind of what he experiences. Your pet's oral hygiene affects his overall health. Diseases of the mouth can often be painful and can contribute to additional problems. Having regular dental checkups and having your pet's teeth cleaned are important to ensuring a positive quality of life.

**Learn more about dental health for your pets:**

**Taken from the Veterinary Oral Health Council website ([www.vohc.org](http://www.vohc.org)):**

### **Cause**

The cause of gum disease is the same in cats and dogs as it is in people.

Gum disease is an infection resulting from build-up of soft dental plaque on the surfaces of the teeth around the gums. The bacteria in dental plaque irritate the gum tissue if plaque is allowed to accumulate, which often leads to infection in the bone surrounding the teeth.

Hard dental tartar consists of calcium salts from saliva deposited on plaque. Tartar starts to form within a few days on a tooth surface that is not kept clean, and provides a rough surface that enhances further plaque accumulation. Once it has begun to grow in thickness, tartar is difficult to remove without dental instruments.

### **Effects**

Bad breath is the most common effect noted by owners. However, this is often only the tip of the iceberg.

The gums become irritated, leading to bleeding and oral pain and your cat or dog may lose its appetite or drop food from its mouth while eating.

The roots may become so severely affected that some teeth become loose and fall out.

Bacteria surrounding the roots gain access to the blood stream. Studies have shown that dogs with severe periodontal disease have more severe microscopic damage in their kidneys, heart muscle and liver than do dogs with less severe periodontal disease.

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## **Management**

The key to management of gum disease (for humans or pets!) is prevention. As long as the surfaces of the teeth are cleaned frequently, the gums will stay healthy.

Excellent oral health is maintained by daily oral hygiene. The gold standard is brushing. Daily chewing activities can also be effective in maintaining oral health.

Daily use of products that have been awarded the VOHC Seal will help to keep your pet's teeth clean and the gum tissues and bone around the roots healthy.

VOHC recommends periodic veterinary examination of the mouth and teeth of your dog or cat. Many pets, particularly middle-aged and older cats and dogs, require periodic professional scaling in addition to on-going plaque control.

**Check out this link for step by step instructions on how to brush your dog's teeth:**  
<http://pets.webmd.com/healthy-dog-teeth-10/slideshow-brushing-dog-teeth>