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Tips To Avoid The Dentist

Dental disease is one of the most common conditions found in cats and dogs. It can lead to bad breath, pain and even loss of teeth. Dental disease can shorten your pets' lifespan by contributing to heart, liver and kidney disease, however it is something we can prevent. To keep your pets keep health and strong here a four easy tips:

1. Look!

Train your pet to let you look into their mouth. Lifting your pet's upper lip to expose the gums and teeth is a great way to get them used to mouth examinations. Keep an eye out for discolouration of the gums, any bleeding of gums, and the presence of tartar or chipped teeth. Red or swollen gums can be a sign of developing dental disease.



2. Brush.

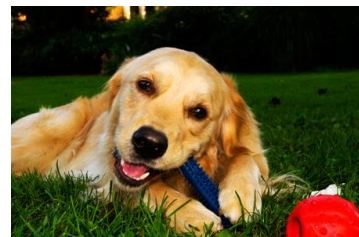
Brushing your pet's teeth is the most effective way to fight dental plaque, it also minimizes the development of periodontal disease. Use a soft toothbrush, holding the bristles at a 45-degree angle to the teeth. Brush using oval movements for a minute or two, focusing on the gum line. Always be gentle when brushing your pet's teeth.

You can brush your pet's teeth dry, with water or you can use specifically designed pet toothpaste. Human toothpaste is not to be used as your pet will swallow it. If brushing is difficult you can try using a tea towel wrapped around your finger to wipe clean your pet's teeth.

Some pets will need to be trained to have their teeth brushed – start by lifting the upper lip each day and immediately giving them a treat. Once they look forward to this, put the toothbrush under the lip and immediately give them a treat. If your pet accepts this you can slowly start brushing, but make sure you keep it a positive experience for your pet. Teeth brushing needs to be done at least every two days to make any appreciable difference to dental health.

3. Play.

Rubber toys can help clean your pet's teeth simply by playing. The action of chewing on the toy helps to dislodge plaque as it accumulates. *Tennis balls should be avoided as they can cause excessive wear of teeth.*



4. Eat/ drink.

Specific dental dry food can help to reduce dental disease. These foods can reduce tartar and plaque development and so prevent periodontal disease from developing. Feeding dental treats regularly can help reduce the plaque load as well. There are also drinking water additives that can help reduce plaque buildup as your pet drinks.

Dogs and cats clean their teeth on bones in the wild so these can be fed to help reduce plaque, but unfortunately they can cause problems as well. Some pets try to swallow them whole, and it is very common to break teeth trying to chew them up. Feeding large bones with no cut surfaces can help prevent these problems, but pets should *always* be supervised when they are eating bones.

