

#### Stage 1 Periodontal Disease:

There is visible tartar build up on the teeth and slight swelling and redness of the gums.



#### Stage 2 and 3 Periodontal Disease:

In stage 2, the gums are more swollen and there can be mild loss of bone around the tooth roots which is only visible on x-rays.



Stage 3 looks similar to stage 2 on the surface but x-rays would show more severe bone loss.

#### Stage 4 Periodontal Disease:

Stage 4 is very serious, with severe tartar accumulation, receded gum lines, tooth damage and decay, and bone loss.



### Is there anything I can do at home for my pet's oral health?

Regularly brushing your pet's teeth is the single most effective action you can take to keep your pet's teeth healthy and possibly prevent most of the common oral diseases. Daily brushing is best, but not always possible; brushing several times a week can also be effective.

Most dogs accept brushing but cats can be more resistant. Patience and training are important. There are also many products on the market with claims that they improve dental health, but not all of them are effective.

Talk with your veterinarian about any dental products, treats, dental specific diets, and home brushing activities you are considering for your pet.

\*\*\*Dental Images used with permission © AVDC\*\*\*

For more information, visit:

[avma.org](http://avma.org)

American Veterinary  
Dental College  
[avdc.org](http://avdc.org)

American Animal  
Hospital Association  
[aaha.org/pet\\_owner](http://aaha.org/pet_owner)



[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org) | 800.248.3862

# PET DENTAL CARE

Brought to you by your veterinarian  
and the American Veterinary Medical Association



# WHAT IS VETERINARY DENTISTRY AND WHO PROVIDES IT?

Veterinary dentistry, much like human dentistry, includes preventive care, cleaning, adjustment, filing, extraction and repair of teeth. These procedures are performed by a veterinarian or a board-certified veterinary dentist. In some areas veterinary technicians are also allowed to perform certain dental procedures under the supervision of a veterinarian.

Typical steps of a dental exam:

- The veterinarian will perform an overall oral exam
- X-rays may be needed to evaluate the health of the jaw and tooth roots below the gum line
- Dental cleaning under anesthesia includes scaling that will remove dental plaque and tartar; and also polishing

**Most dental disease occurs below the gum line where you can't see it. Damage may already be occurring even though the teeth look healthy.**

## WHY DOES PET DENTISTRY REQUIRE ANESTHESIA?

Unlike humans, your pet does not understand the importance of dental care and might react by moving, trying to escape or even biting. Anesthesia makes it possible to perform the dental procedures with less stress and pain for your pet. In addition, anesthesia allows for a more thorough cleaning because your pet is not moving around and risking injury from the dental equipment. It also prevents movement that could reduce the quality of x-ray images.

Although anesthesia will always have risks, it is safer now than ever before. The risks are very low and are far outweighed by the benefits dentistry will bring to your pet. Most pets are on their feet within minutes of waking up and can usually go home the same day.



### Before Dental Cleaning:

- Red, swollen gums
- Build-up of tartar and plaque



### After Dental Cleaning:

- Much healthier gums
- Cleaner teeth

## WHAT ABOUT "ANESTHESIA-FREE" DENTAL CLEANINGS?

The American Veterinary Dental College does not recommend dental cleanings without anesthesia because it does not allow for cleaning or inspection under the gum line where most disease occurs. A pet that is not anesthetized can also result in injury to the pet or person performing the procedure and also result in unnecessary discomfort, stress and pain for the pet.

## WHAT TYPES OF DENTAL PROBLEMS CAN A PET HAVE?

- Extra teeth or retained baby teeth
- Broken teeth and roots
- Broken or fractured jaw
- Abscesses or infected teeth
- Periodontal disease
- Palate defects such as cleft palate
- Cysts or tumors in the mouth
- Malocclusion or misalignment of teeth and bite

## WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN A PET?

Your pet's teeth should be checked at least once per year by your veterinarian for early signs of a problem and to keep your pet's mouth healthy. Always use caution when evaluating your pet's mouth. A pet that is experiencing pain might bite.

- Bad breath
- Reduced appetite
- Broken or loose teeth
- Bleeding from the mouth
- Teeth that are discolored or covered in tartar
- Abnormal chewing, drooling or dropping food from the mouth
- Swelling in the areas surrounding the mouth
- Irritability
- Changes in behavior

## WHAT IS PERIODONTAL DISEASE?

**Periodontal disease is the most common dental condition in dogs and cats. By the time your pet is 3 years old, he or she will very likely already have early evidence of periodontal disease.**

Early detection and treatment are critical, because advanced periodontal disease can cause severe problems and pain for your pet. Periodontal disease doesn't just impact your pet's mouth; other health problems associated with periodontal disease include kidney, liver and heart muscle changes.

Periodontal disease starts with plaque that hardens into tartar. Tartar above the gum line can often easily be seen and removed, but the plaque and tartar below the gum line are damaging and set the stage for infection and damage to the jawbone and tissues that connect the tooth to the jaw bone. Periodontal disease is graded on a scale of 0 (normal) to 4 (severe).

