

LET US
HELP YOU
Take Care Of Your
PET'S
TEETH



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Thank you for including us in the conversation about your dog or cat's dental health. Just as with human dental care, following a consistent home care program will safeguard your pet's dental health for a healthier, happier dog or cat. There is no substitute for professional veterinary dental care.

We can help you care for your pet's teeth- just ask your veterinarian.

Why is my pet's breath stinky... and what can I do about it?

There are many signs of dental disease and this is one area where you can make a difference in your pet's health. Pets are masters at not showing discomfort; if you notice any of the signs below, it's time to call your veterinarian right away for an appointment:

Signs of Dental Disease.

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1. Bad breath
 2. Red swollen or bleeding gums
 3. Tartar buildup on teeth
 4. Decreased appetite
 5. Oral pain
 6. Weight loss
 7. Discharge from nose
 8. Broken teeth
 9. Loose teeth

Often it is a **combination** of the signs listed above, rather than just one. With oral pain, signs include: difficulty chewing; pawing at their face, chewing more on one side of the mouth; dropping food out of mouth when eating or not playing with toys or chew sticks as often. In many cases, your pet may not show any outward signs of pain.

How will my veterinarian know if my pet has dental disease?

During an annual exam, your pet receives an oral exam. During that oral exam, the doctor examines the teeth for tartar (calculus), the gums for inflammation (gingivitis), signs of infection and for missing or broken teeth.

How will my doctor treat my pet? *(See the back page for more details)*

Following the oral exam, your doctor will make recommendations for proper treatment. For pets, professional dental procedures are performed under general anesthesia only. Therefore, the medical team will require your pet's blood to be analyzed to check your pet's systemic health before anesthesia. The kidneys, liver and lungs primarily process the medications and drugs used for general anesthesia and pain control. The blood tests provide the veterinarian indicators of your pet's organ health so it can be determined if they are fit to withstand general anesthesia.

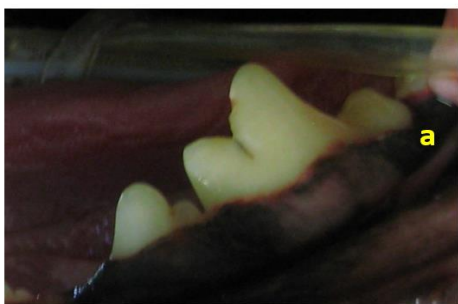
Most pets with dental disease will need specialized periodontal treatment consisting of a full oral exam including probing for pockets of infection, dental x-rays, ultrasonic dental cleaning, hand scaling above and below the gum line, polishing the teeth and rinsing with an oral care solution. The procedure is very similar to what your family dentist offers.

After full oral exam, teeth that have been found to be affected by dental disease (ie. periodontal disease, caries (cavities), root fractures, crown fractures exposing the nerves & vessels or tooth resorption), can be appropriately treated depending on the type of dental disease affecting them.

Why are x-rays important?

Similar to human dentistry, your veterinary dental procedure includes full mouth x-rays. Why? Just as a human dentist, dental radiographs (x-rays) are one of the most important diagnostic tools available to a veterinary dentist. They allow detailed examination of the internal anatomy of the teeth, tooth roots, and the bone that surrounds the roots. Below are examples of the importance of dental x-rays and their findings.

Stage 3 Periodontal Disease



Do you see where 'a' is? It looks totally normal but it is not normal under the gum line. There is serious bone loss in this location.



Do you see 'a' now? If you cannot see this bone loss when you look into your pet's mouth neither can your veterinarian. Only X-rays can find this bone loss. This is caused by plaque under the gumline.

When your veterinarian provides an estimate for a dental procedure, often there is a wide range in the two estimates. This is because they cannot see below the gumline unless x-rays are performed. For example, note "a" on the left photo* above "a" looks normal on visual examination. Dental x-rays showed that there is actually bone loss caused by plaque under the gumline. It is impossible to truly know the extent of the dental disease until we have the pet under anesthesia, have reviewed the x-rays and done an in-depth oral exam. At that point a treatment plan can be formulated and a more detailed estimate provided.

* Note. Photo credit American Veterinary Dental College.

But my pet seems normal?

It is very common for severe dental problems to go undetected for long periods of time. Unfortunately, by the time there are obvious indications of periodontal disease, such as bad breath and loose teeth, there is already significant damage.

Periodontal disease begins and exists under the gumline where it is not visible and white teeth do not mean that your pet is free from disease. Your pet can't tell you when they're suffering from a toothache or other types of pain. If you notice any of signs as described on page 2, contact your veterinarian to schedule an exam.

Your pet's dental procedure what to expect...

On the morning of your pet's appointment, please ensure that your pet has received no food after 9pm the night before- water is okay. Dental intakes are between 8am and 9am. At this intake, you will meet with the veterinarian. We do not offer a drop off option as this is a key time to discuss the dental procedure and for you to speak with the doctor prior to the procedure. The goal of the procedure is not to save teeth, but rather to provide your pet with a pain free mouth.

1. Your pet will have a pre-medication injection which is usually a combination of sedative and pain relief.
2. Anaesthetic drugs and fluids are given into a vein on a front leg so your pet will have a small clipped-up area here where the catheter was inserted.
3. A breathing tube is placed in the airway from the oral cavity into the trachea.
4. Any large lumps of tartar are removed and the teeth are ultrasonically scaled above and below the gum line. The teeth are charted/probed and investigated to find any specific problem areas.
5. X-rays are used to assess teeth and the bone around them. Your veterinary dentist can/may call you at this time to discuss any findings from the x-rays. At this time the estimate may be adjusted.
6. Once infected teeth have been identified, dental nerve blocks (numbing agents) are given to your pet. Those teeth are then extracted and the sockets are usually stitched. The sutures are dissolvable and do not need removing.
7. Reason for extractions include:
 - fractures which go into the pulp cavity or root fractures
 - tooth resorption
 - abscesses
 - cavities
 - severe periodontal disease (bone loss)
8. After your pet's dental procedure is complete, and your pet has recovered and woken up from the anesthesia, they will stay in recovery with their IV for several hours to keep them hydrated.
9. Once your pet is discharged your veterinarian or veterinary technician will review everything that was performed during the dental procedure with you. Your pet will go home with the prescribed pain medication and you may notice some grogginess, drooling, or drowsiness for several hours. They're typically almost back to normal that evening or the next day.
10. Your veterinary dentist or technician will schedule a no-charge dental recheck within two weeks.



Hopefully, this helps unveil some of the 'mystery' behind what happens for your pet's dental procedure. If you have any questions- don't hesitate to contact your veterinary team.

Your doctor may also recommend a referral to a veterinarian with more specialized surgical training if there is more serious pathology than anticipated.

Some examples of disease that may require referral include:

1. Severe tooth resorption
2. Teeth with a high risk of jaw fracture during extraction
3. Certain oral tumors
4. Teeth where root canal treatments would be an option.
5. Complications during extraction. (Root tips that have gone into the sinuses or mandibular canal, or fractured root tips that cannot safely be removed)

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