

# Dental Disease in Dogs and Cats

Just like humans, dogs and cats can suffer from tartar and plaque build up. 80% of dogs and cats over the age of 4 years have some form of dental disease. Unlike humans, our pets are not routinely brushing their teeth everyday which means providing a preventative oral care regime is so important.

## Some factors which may increase the development of dental disease are:

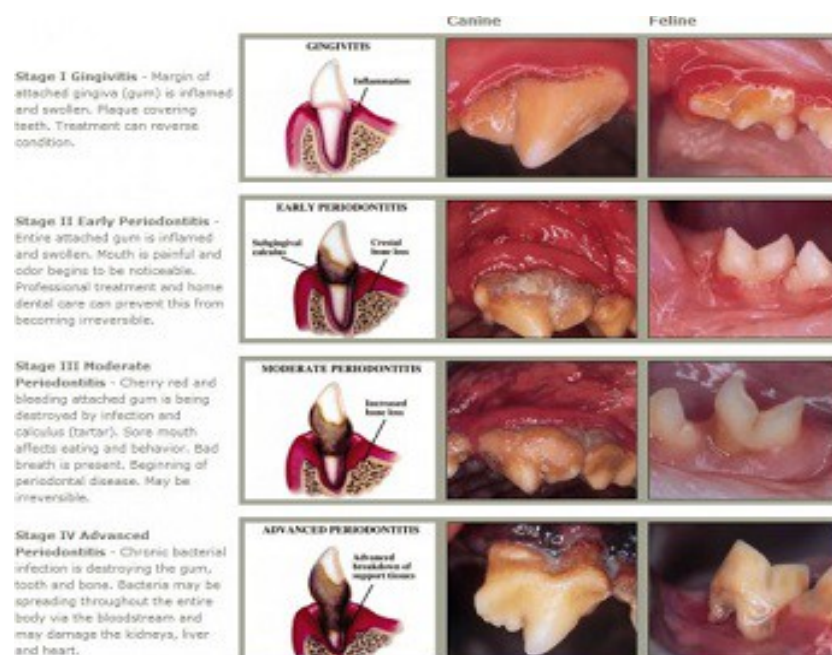
- Poor quality diet or soft food diet which can cause a more rapid accumulation of plaque and tartar build up
- Breed- some breeds are more predisposed to dental disease due to over crowding and misaligned teeth. Small breed dogs are more likely to develop problems than large size dogs.
- Age- dental disease is much more common in older pets.

## The Process of Dental Disease:

- Plaque and tartar accumulation- over time plaque hardens into tartar, a hard yellow brown substance.
- Gingivitis (inflammation of the gums)- the build up of plaque and tartar can lead to gingivitis which in turn can lead to Periodontal Disease
- Periodontal Disease- is a painful inflammatory condition where accumulation of tartar and calculus on the teeth causes gum recession around the base of the tooth. Infection soon follows and the gums recede further, exposing sensitive unprotected tooth root surfaces and the bony tooth sockets. Left untreated, the infection spreads deep into the tooth socket, destroying the bone. Ultimately, the tooth loosens and falls out.
- These bacteria can also enter the blood stream and cause damage to internal organs, in particular the heart, lungs, kidney and liver.**

## What are the signs of dental disease?

- Bad breath
- Yellow or discoloured teeth
- Reluctance to eat or pawing at mouth
- Drooling, sneezing, coughing
- Subdued behaviour



## How can I prevent dental disease?

A Veterinarian or Veterinary Nurse can examine your pets teeth to determine if professional cleaning is required. Your pet should then have their teeth examined every 6 months to assess plaque and tartar build up. Continued dental home care is recommended following dental assessment/mechanical cleaning.

Dental home care aims to minimise the build up of plaque and tartar to avoid or lengthen the time inbetween professional cleaning. Using one or a combination of methods is helpful and often depends on what works best for you and your pet.

### *Toothbrushing*

Brushing teeth is the most effective way of keeping your pets teeth clean if he/she will tolerate it! Brushing should be performed at least once daily.

Using a pet toothbrush or finger brush is best as they have ultra soft bristles and are designed especially for the shape of the pets' mouth. Pet toothpaste is available too, which comes in a variety of meaty flavours. Since the brushing action is the most important part dont be too concerned if your pet does not like the toothpaste or if you need to try something else, like peanut butter!

When introducing toothbrushing for the first time make sure your pet is calm and use rewards or treats to try and make the situation less traumatic for him.

Start by using your finger or toothbrush on 1 or 2 teeth at a time, adding more teeth each session until your pet gets used to it. Make each session brief and stop if your pet becomes too stressed. It can take quite some time until your pet gets used to toothbrushing, so you need to be very patient!

### *Dental Diet*

We recommend Royal Canin Dental Veterinary Diet as a completely balanced diet for both cats and dogs prone to dental disease. It can be fed as a complete diet on its own or mixed in with normal food. Because of the size, shape and texture the dental kibbles have a mild abrasive effect on dental plaque and tartar when chewed. It contains Sodium polyphosphate which binds salivary calcium, making it unavailable for tartar formation.

Royal Canin Dental comes in small dog (under 10kg)- with added skin and urinary support; large dog with added joint and digestive support and Feline dental with added urinary, digestive and hairball support.



## ***Veterinary Products***

There are some great new products available that we highly recommend.

HealthyMouth for dogs and cats is a dental water additive which carries the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) seal of approval. It controls the plaque leading to inflammation and gum disease without chemical agents. Healthymouth cleans teeth and gums and reduces germs and bacteria that is left untreated. Long-term use provides continuous improvement in mouth and overall health.

PlaqueOff for dogs and cats aids in stopping plaque from forming on the teeth. PlaqueOff provides a simple easy solution to improving your pet's oral hygiene with just a sprinkle on to your pet's food daily.



## ***Toys and treats for chewing***

There are plenty of toys and treats on the market available that are designed to clean teeth by the chewing action. Some of the treats contain chemical compounds that help prevent plaque and tartar accumulation.

There are a great range of Kong toys available that are durable, great for chewing and also provide enrichment. Most of them can be used to stuff treats or food into providing hours of fun for your pet! Feeding bones can accompany some complications such as gastrointestinal obstruction, diarrhoea, tooth damage or fractures and obesity can become a problem from over feeding. If you choose to feed bones it is important to be aware of these risks. Feed only raw, uncooked bones that are free from splinters and always supervise your pet while they are eating them.

**Make sure you always supervise your pet when eating any bones, chews or toys!**



***Other Products Include:***

There are a number of other products available such as gels, powders or liquids that can either be added to food or water, or rubbed onto the teeth directly.

Ensure that the product you use is recommended by our Veterinarian. Remember that these products serve to prevent future plaque build only and do not remove plaque and tartar accumulation that is already present.