

Animals, just like people, need routine dental care. Imagine what your teeth would look and feel like if you NEVER brushed your teeth. Periodontal (dental) disease can play a major role in a pet's overall health and lead to a variety of health issues, not just loose teeth and bad breath. Dental care is not just a cosmetic endeavor. Although tooth brushing and dental cleanings may make the teeth look nice, their main benefit is in preventing serious health problems. That is why routine dental care is the number one thing that a pet owner can do to help extend their pet's life expectancy. It is estimated that 85% of dogs and cats have some form of dental disease that can cause bad breath, tooth loss, discomfort and infection.



### Hours of Operation

Monday 8am - 8pm  
Tuesday 8am - 8pm  
Wednesday 8am - 8pm  
6:30am Early Morning  
Check-In  
Thursday 8am - 8pm  
Friday 8am - 5pm  
Saturday 8am - 3pm  
Sunday Closed

For more Information or to Schedule a Consultation,  
please call: (920) 498-2808 or 800-236-2808.

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# DENTAL CARE



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Plaque and tartar (calculus) on the teeth are actually colonies of bacteria, both dead and living, that have attached to the tooth surface. Once attached to the tooth surface, they can invade the surrounding gingival (gum) tissues, producing toxins which cause tissue injury. This is commonly called gingivitis, or inflammation of the gum tissue. Outwardly, this causes the gingiva to appear red, puffy, irritated and may cause the gums to bleed. As the periodontal disease progresses, the bacteria continue to invade the surrounding tissues and affect the deeper tissue structures that support tooth stability. This can lead to gingival recession, loose teeth and destruction of the bone underlying the teeth.

When bacteria continue to penetrate the gingival tissue, they can reach a level where they have direct access to the blood stream. Once in the circulatory system, these bacteria are transported throughout the body and can deposit themselves in organ structures such as the liver, kidneys, lungs or heart. Bacteria can then affect these organs and cause such things as pneumonia, heart murmurs and severe kidney infection. Because calculus on the teeth is comprised of bacteria, it is always recommended that pets either are given an antibiotic injection when dental work is being performed, or in more severe cases, oral antibiotics are used for several days both before and after dental procedures.

The treatment of periodontal disease first begins with a dental cleaning by your veterinary team. Dental cleanings in animals are very similar to those in people. Ultrasonic and hand scalers are used to removed the calculus both above and below the gum line. During the scaling process, the instruments leave microscopic grooves on the tooth surface which can allow the plaque and tartar to adhere more easily. Therefore, after scaling the teeth, a polishing paste is used to smooth the tooth surface making it more difficult for plaque and tartar to adhere. The mouth is carefully examined during the cleaning process for any chipped, broken or loose teeth. The depths of the gingiva are probed to search for any pockets along the tooth surface, or to determine if there may be any root exposure. Broken or loose teeth are typically removed to prevent them from causing further problems. Teeth with exposed roots are also extracted to help prevent a tooth root abscess. Occasionally, more involved dental problems are discovered during the cleaning. These types of issues may require advance treatments such as: root canal, gingival surgery, special medications or oral surgery. Once the teeth have been cleaned of calculus, and any other complications are corrected, owners have the option of treatments such as fluoride and sealant to help strengthen the teeth. Just as in people, fluoride can be applied to the teeth to help strengthen the enamel. Strong tooth enamel is essential to preventing cavities, chipped and broken teeth. Additionally, dental sealants can be applied to provide a barrier on the tooth surface and make it more difficult for plaque and tartar to adhere. On average, most dental sealants provide 30 days of coverage, and can be maintained by use of at home sealant kits to provide a longer duration of action.

The frequency of dental cleanings is dependent on numerous factors. Genetics can play a major role in oral health of animals. Some pets are genetically predisposed for plaque and tartar to build-up more easily, and have thinner tooth enamel. Small breed dogs, especially those with short muzzles, tend to have more dental issues.

The term extraction refers to surgical removal of diseased or abnormal teeth. Extractions can be simple (loose teeth which are easily removed with a dental forceps or lever) or complex. Complex extractions typically involve dead, broken or diseased teeth, and typically are the large molars or premolars. These teeth, because they are otherwise more securely attached than a simple extraction, require more involved techniques for removal. Often, a drill is required to ensure proper extraction and help prevent further infection, abscess or complications. After the extraction, the site of the removed tooth frequently requires closure of the gingiva using dissolvable suture. Sometimes, the extraction site is packed with an antibiotic preparation to help reduce complications.



*Before Dental Cleaning*



*After Dental Cleaning*

Prevention of periodontal disease is very important, as it can decrease or eliminate the need for advanced treatments and tooth removal. Brushing your pet's teeth daily is the best preventative treatment available. It takes roughly 24 hours for plaque and tartar to harden on the teeth, therefore routine brushing before it has a chance to harden can virtually eliminate dental calculus. Brushing your pet's teeth daily will provide optimal health benefit, and even brushing every other day can make a significant difference. When brushing your pet's teeth, remember to only use pet formulated toothpaste, as the fluoride and some of the additives in human toothpaste can cause GI upset. Pets aren't able to spit out the toothpaste, so they require a formula that can be swallowed. Many pet toothpastes come in yummy flavors such as chicken, beef and seafood which make tooth brushing more palatable and accepted. Other methods of preventing periodontal disease include use of special pet foods that are created to reduce plaque and tartar formation. There are dental treats and chews that have additives which fight plaque build-up and promote salivation to help "wash" bacteria from the tooth surface. Oral hygiene rinses and gels help kill the bacteria, fight plaque and "wash" the oral cavity. Home sealant kits are available to use either after a dental cleaning, or prior to calculus formation, to help provide a barrier on the tooth surface that makes it less easy for plaque and tartar to adhere. Most home sealants are applied to the teeth on a weekly basis, and application is quite easy. Owners looking for an easy to use product may also consider drinking water additives that help fight plaque and tartar formation. A combination of tooth brushing, diet and other oral health products can provide a complimentary mix of dental care to cover all aspects of oral health and wellness.

### **How do I pursue dental care for my pet?**

Oral health assessment is part of routine yearly or bi-yearly wellness examination of all pets. Your pet's health care team, after examining the mouth, can make recommendations regarding dental cleanings, tooth extraction and oral care products. If a dental cleaning is recommended, those procedures are scheduled Monday through Friday and involve a morning check-in with the attending veterinarian. Our veterinary support staff will discuss the available treatment options and provide you with an estimate based your pet's needs. The dental cleaning is then typically performed that morning. Your pet can usually go home later that same day. A member of our staff will provide you with an overview of the dental treatments performed that day, as well as recommendations for home care and dental care products.

