

How to Brush Your Pet's Teeth

Pets are an important part of our lives for many years. Good dental care is essential to extend your pet's life span and assure a good quality of life. Just like you, your pet needs to receive daily dental care at home. It is best to begin home care when the puppy or kitten is between 8 and 12 weeks; however, it is never too late. If the animal has any tartar, it must be removed ultrasonically at the clinic. This process, called a prophylaxis, will allow you to start your home care with teeth that are free of plaque and tartar and will make your efforts easier and more effective.

The supplies you need are a toothbrush, preferably one specifically designed for dogs and cats and a pet dentifrice. Most animals accept brushing very well if they are introduced to the procedure in a calm and patient way. The best way is as follows:

DAY 1: Gently pet and scratch the muzzle, slowly lifting the lip for about 30 seconds. Reward with a treat at the end of the session.

DAY 2: Repeat as above except gently run your finger over the pet's teeth for 30 to 45 seconds. Reward with a treat and praise.

DAY 3: Repeat Day 2, adding 15 seconds time to running your finger over the pet's teeth. Always reward with treat and praise.

Day 4: If all is going well, insert finger over teeth for 30 seconds and gently insert toothbrush and run over teeth for 30 seconds.

DAY 5: Repeat as above and increase the time of the toothbrush in the pet's mouth by 30 second increments.

DAY 6: Repeat as above, adding a small amount of dentifrice to the toothbrush and gently pass over the pet's teeth.

DAY 7: You know your pet the best of all. If you feel that he/she is accepting the brushing well, gradually increase the brushing time until you are able to spend at least one minute on each side.

Helpful Hints

- *Be patient. Take time with the process or else the pet may become resistant.
- *Praise the pet. It's a new experience and praising the pet will make him/her more receptive.
- *Reward the pet with treats at the end of each session. Remember always make it fun.
- *Stop immediately if the pet shows any signs of aggression. Call the hospital for further professional advice.
- *Human toothpaste is for humans, NOT pets. It is common for human toothpaste to cause stomach problems and even vomiting.
- *Cleaning at home will decrease the need for professional dental care.