



Brushing Your Pet's Teeth



The best way to prevent dental disease in your pets is by brushing their teeth daily. Acclimating them to a toothbrush while they are young is the best way to help them accept the activity, but pets can learn to accept having their teeth brushed at any age. Brushing is important because it cleans away the plaque that leads to bad breath or more serious problems, such as tooth decay or gum disease. Introduce each of these 12 steps slowly, in order, and allow as much time as necessary to help your pet accept the activity. If you notice any stress or aggressive behavior from your pet while attempting any of these steps, please stop the activity and contact us right away. Important: be sure to use lots of praise and treats during each step! While this seems counterintuitive because you are cleaning the teeth and then giving some food, it will help you reach your ultimate goal of teaching the skill. You can work on removing food from the equation once your pet's a pro!

1. Buy a toothbrush and toothpaste made for your pet. Pet toothbrushes have a longer, curved handle that makes it easy to reach the back teeth. Another type is a finger brush. Only use toothpaste that is specifically formulated for pets, as human toothpaste can irritate your pet's stomach. Our hospital carries these and other oral health products that you and your pet will love!
2. Choose a calm time to brush your pet's teeth. Ideally this would be when you and your pet are alone and your pet is already relaxed.
3. Choose the location for brushing your pet's teeth. Using a corner of a chair, sofa or room can help him/her feel more secure and comfortable, allowing for easier handling. Make sure you have good lighting in the room.
4. Touch the teeth and gums without the brush. Lift the top lip up and hold it while you touch the teeth, then pull the bottom lip down and touch the bottom teeth for about 15-20 seconds. It may be necessary to do this a couple of times before introducing the toothbrush.
5. Touch the toothbrush to the teeth. Touch the front, side, and back teeth on the top and bottom. Praise and reward your pet for tolerating this step. It may be necessary to repeat this step several times for your pet to learn to tolerate the toothbrush.
6. Introduce the toothpaste to your pet. Start by showing your pet the toothpaste and letting him/her lick it from your finger. Repeat, if necessary, before starting to actually brush the teeth.
7. Start brushing the teeth. Hold the upper lip up and brush the upper front teeth. Brush the teeth at a 45 degree angle to the gum line using a circular pattern. Start with only a few teeth at first, building up to more teeth over time. Don't forget to praise and reward your pet!
8. Start brushing the bottom teeth. Hold down the bottom lip and brush the bottom teeth. Start with the front teeth, then progress to the sides and back.
9. The inside of the teeth will be a little harder to brush. If necessary, work on adding this step after your dog is calm with the outsides of the upper and lower teeth being brushed.
10. Reward yourself for doing something that will give your pet a healthier life!