



# Dental Health



Up to 85% of dogs and cats over the age of six have dental disease. Dental disease is not “normal” in pets. Dental tartar and halitosis is a source of infection in animals, is painful, and will progress to tooth loss. It is not possible to do a proper dental cleaning on animals unless they are under anesthesia. Animals need to be under anesthesia so we can ultrasonically scale the inside and outside of the teeth, as well as beneath the gumline.

**When should your pet have a dental cleaning?** If there is visible tartar on the teeth, you should schedule a dental appointment for your pet. Brushing the teeth when tartar is present does not help remove the tartar. Once it is hardened it needs to be scaled off.

**Why does your pet have dental disease?** Pets acquire dental disease from not brushing the teeth and not having the teeth professionally cleaned. Humans brush their teeth every day and see a dentist regularly to prevent dental disease, and the same steps are needed in pets as well. Some breeds of dogs are especially prone to dental disease.

**How do I prevent dental disease in my pet?** Brushing the teeth EVERY DAY is the only way to prevent dental disease in pets, as well as having the teeth cleaned by a veterinarian on a regular basis. Using dental diets, sprays, sealers and wipes can help, but not as much as brushing. Feeding hard food or treats does not prevent dental disease.

**What does a dental procedure involve?** Your pet will have a physical exam, pre-anesthetic blood work and an intravenous catheter before anesthesia is given. After your pet is anesthetized, he/she will be hooked up to monitoring equipment to ensure safety while under anesthesia. We continually monitor heart rate, respiratory rate, temperature, oxygenation and ECG. A veterinary technician will then clean and polish all of the teeth, while a veterinarian will evaluate the health of each tooth.

**What are dental x-rays and are they necessary?** Dental x-rays allow us to evaluate the tooth below the gumline, as well as evaluate the enamel of the teeth. Every effort is made to save the teeth in your pet's mouth, however, if a tooth is unhealthy it will be surgically extracted. Our office has invested in dental radiology equipment, anesthetic monitoring equipment and high speed dental equipment to ensure your pet gets the best possible dental care we can offer.

**How will my pet eat if several teeth are extracted?** This is a concern for many clients, however, removing diseased teeth is actually better for your pet. No teeth are better than bad teeth! In many cases, once the diseased teeth are removed, the pet actually eats better because the pain and infection are gone! Cats can get a severe disease where the enamel of the teeth dissolve. To prevent pain, the best treatment for this disease is removal of most of the teeth.

**My cat/dog still eats fine and the teeth are bad...is he/she in pain?** Animals have a strong natural instinct to hide pain. By the time a pet stops eating, the pain is more severe than the will to survive and eat. Normal eating is not a reliable indicator of pain. If there is any redness or recession along the gumline, then it's likely that there is pain and infection present.

## ***Dental Health, continued***

Is my pet “too old” for a dental procedure? Pets are never too old to have dental prophylaxis to alleviate oral pain and infection. Most clients report a major change in their pet’s behavior after dental disease is appropriately treated.

It is important to try to prevent dental disease from developing in your pet. Brushing the teeth at home and having dental cleanings done when minimal tartar is present will prevent major oral surgery. We would be happy to discuss your pet’s dental condition and develop a treatment and prevention plan to allow your pet to have a pain and infection-free mouth!

