



# Animal Clinic of Chardon

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FEBRUARY 2019 NEWSLETTER

## It's National Pet Dental Health Month!



### Did you know?

**How many teeth do dogs have?** The average adult dog has about a third more teeth than his human counterpart. Adult dogs have 42 permanent teeth compared to a measly 32 average human teeth (not counting any wisdom teeth. Those are "bonus."). Puppies possess 28 baby teeth while human babies will have 20 deciduous or "baby" teeth.

**How many teeth do cats have?** Cats have 30 adult teeth and 26 baby teeth. That's far fewer than dogs (42 and 28) and less than humans (32 and 20). Those "fangs" or upper canine teeth often protrude saber-tooth tiger style and lend some cats an intimidating smile.

### When do dogs begin to lose their baby teeth?

Puppies begin losing baby teeth around 12 to 16 weeks of age. By four months of age, almost all of a pup's deciduous teeth have been shed and many of the permanent teeth have already

## 5 Signs of Dental Pain in Pets

Your pets can't tell you when they're suffering from a toothache or other types of pain. If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian to schedule an exam.

**1. No signs at all.** Dogs, cats and other companion animals, such as rabbits, rarely show signs of dental pain. This is a survival mechanism, an instinctual behavior that our domesticated animals have in common with their wild ancestors.

**2. Bad breath.** The odor is a byproduct of the bacterial metabolic process. In pets with periodontal disease, there is more bacteria in the mouth, and so the odor increases. "Doggy breath" or "tuna breath" is not normal and needs to be evaluated.

**3. Altered behavior.** Chewing on one side of the mouth, dropping food, running away from the food dish, crying when yawning, hiding, not grooming themselves and acting "grumpy" are all signs of dental pain. You know your pet better than anyone, so look for abnormal behaviors.



**4. Bleeding.** Bleeding from the mouth is usually due to periodontal disease, but it could also be evidence of fractured teeth, lacerations or ulcers on the tongue or gum tissue or the presence of an oral mass. Look for thick, ropery saliva, spots of blood found on toys or beds or drops of blood in the water or food dish. If the periodontal disease is severe enough, you may notice bleeding from the nose or bloody discharge when your pet sneezes.

**5. Return to normal.** Once our veterinary team addresses your pet's oral issues, your pooch may show he's feeling better by acting like a puppy again or your kitty might seek extra attention.

## Something to smile about!

If the doctor recommends a teeth cleaning during the month of February and you book it at that time, you will receive 4 extra loyalty stamps when the cleaning is complete!

*Must be booked by*

*erupted and are in place.*

### **Stinky breath?**

*Studies show that 70 percent of cats show signs of gum disease (gingivitis) by age three.*

*Symptoms include yellow and brown build-up of tartar along the gum line, red inflamed gums, and persistent bad breath.*

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## Guide to Brushing Your Pet's Teeth

If you are not paying attention to your pet's teeth every day, you are neglecting one of the most critical contributors to her overall well-being: home dental care. Want to help extend that lifetime of purrs and wags? Then help promote oral health with daily brushing.

One of the best weapons in the fight against pet periodontal disease is actually a very simple tool: a toothbrush. Some pet owners giggle, groan or roll their eyes when their veterinarian tells them they should be brushing their pets' teeth. The idea of sticking a bristled brush into the mouth of a dog or cat does seem kind of comical — or like a huge hassle. And daily? Who has the time?

Well, suppose you didn't brush your own teeth for several years. Can you imagine how much plaque and tartar would build up on your teeth? Periodontal disease can lead to pain, tooth loss and bacteria in the mouth can spread to internal organs, which can spell trouble for your cat's or dog's health.

One way to help fend off dental disease is to brush your pet's teeth on a regular basis. While there are a lot of tricks we can teach our pets, brushing their own teeth is not one of them, so that task falls to owners. Take heart, however, because although it may sound like a daunting task, brushing your pet's teeth is not as hard as you might think.

### **First Things First**

As a member of your family, your pet deserves to receive the same attention to her teeth as you give to your kids' teeth. Ideally, then, you want to begin dental care when your pet is a youngster.

Starting with a clean slate is also important. If the plaque that builds up on your pet's teeth is not removed within about 24 to 36 hours after eating, it can harden into



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tartar. When that happens, your pet needs professional attention to remove it. Before you begin brushing, ask your veterinarian to examine the condition of your pet's teeth. If necessary, your veterinarian may recommend a professional dental cleaning.

Just as people do, pets should have regular professional cleanings. However, brushing your pet's teeth at home can also help keep periodontal disease at bay.

### **Let the Brushing Begin**

Veterinarians recommend brushing your pet's teeth every day. All you need are a toothbrush and pet-friendly toothpaste. Look for a soft-bristled toothbrush with small-diameter nylon bristles. The toothbrush should also be sized appropriately to fit your pet's mouth. Toothbrushes can be purchased at pet stores, but some of these can be large. For a pet with a smaller mouth, you might try a human pediatric toothbrush, a finger brush or a toothbrush developed specifically for cats, which also works well for small dogs.

It is important to use toothpaste made specifically for animals. Human toothpaste can contain xylitol, a sugar substitute that is toxic to dogs. Even if your toothpaste isn't sugar free, it can contain foaming agents that can cause stomach upset if swallowed. Plus, you'll find that toothpaste for pets comes in flavors that appeal to animals, such as beef or chicken.

Teaching your pet to accept tooth brushing should be a gradual process. You may want to start by letting your pet lick the toothpaste off your finger and then graduate to sliding your finger with the toothpaste into your pet's mouth. Next, substitute a toothbrush for your finger and repeat the same procedure. Each step can be performed on a different day. Make sure to praise your pet at each step, so she associates tooth brushing with a positive experience.

### **Don't Give Up**

Brushing your pet's teeth may seem like a challenge at first. However, after a few weeks of working with your pet, you will find that brushing her teeth becomes as routine as brushing your own. In the end, helping to protect your pet's health is worth it.