**BRUSHING YOUR DOG’S TEETH: DENTAL HOME CARE TIPS.**

Believe it or not, taking care of your dog’s teeth is as important as taking care of your own. Today, nearly two-thirds of dog owners do not provide the veterinarian-recommended guidelines for dog dental care. [Periodontal disease](https://www.colgateprofessional.com/education/patient-education/topics/plaque-and-gingivitis/what-is-periodontal-disease)is the most common clinical condition in adult dogs, and most dogs develop a form of the disease by the time they turn 3 years old.   
  
Despite the theory that a dog’s mouth is cleaner than a human, dogs can still develop problems like tartar and plaque buildup and gingivitis. But it’s not just [bad breath](https://dogsfirst.ie/health-issues/bad-breath-dogs/) and yellow teeth you have to worry about. As with humans, these canine dental problems can actually lead to life-threatening infections and issues including heart, liver, and kidney disease.

Your dog deserves to have a clean mouth, so why not introduce proper oral care at home? It’s going to keep them cleaner, healthier and happier.

Here are some valuable tips for getting started at home:

* Use a brush designed especially for dogs; it’s smaller than a human toothbrush and has softer bristles. [Toothbrushes](https://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Pet-Supplies-Dog-Toothbrushes/zgbs/pet-supplies/2975379011) that you can wear over your finger are also available.
* Keep the process short and simple. Your home is your pet’s “safe zone” so keeping them feeling secure and at ease is your priority. Brushing sessions should be a quick and painless activity for your pet. This way they don’t learn to dislike their cleaning sessions – in fact, they may learn to enjoy it.
* Use [toothpaste](https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/dog-toothpaste-gets-job-done/)designed for dogs; using your own toothpaste can cause distress and upset your dog’s stomach.
* Start brushing your pet’s top teeth first. Hold the upper lip up. Brush the front teeth. Praise your dog.
* Move from the front teeth further back to the side and back teeth on the top.
* Start brushing the bottom teeth. Hold down the bottom lip and brush the bottom teeth. Start with the front teeth, then move to the side and back.
* Don’t overdo it the first few times. Start slowly and quit if your dog gets agitated, even if you don’t brush the whole mouth. You can increase the time every day as he gets used to it.

Develop a Regular Cleaning Routine

* Consistency is key. Brush your dog’s teeth at least 2 to 3 times a week. Once a day brushing is ideal.
* The better you are at keeping a regular routine, the easier it will be on your dog and the more likely he will start to respond positively to you brushing his teeth. It will also help you remember to keep his teeth clean and healthy as you start to commit to a regular cycle.

Make your brushing routine into a habit

Your dog might not go for the tooth brushing at first, but hopefully, you can make it a reasonably pleasant experience for both of you. Try and choose a time when your dog has had a decent amount of exercise, so they are more inclined to sit still for the procedure. Also, make sure to speak soothingly and pleasantly during the brushing and reward your dog with a treat afterwards. Before too long, your dog should start looking forward to the event.

More helpful tips to remember:  
  
Start early with your dog as a puppy!

Grown dogs can learn to become comfortable with dog teeth cleaning, but make things easier for yourself by working with your dog as a puppy

Pick the right tooth paste for your dog

This is very important. Do NOT use regular human toothpaste for your dog. Most human toothpastes include fluoride, which is extremely poisonous to dogs. You can find toothpaste formulated for dogs at most good pet stores.

Dry food is better than soft food

If the tooth brushing ends in blood, sweat, or tears, there are still choices you can make to help improve your dog’s oral health. Crunchy kibble is better for your dog’s teeth than soft food, as soft food is more likely to stick to the teeth and cause decay.

Chew bones and chew toys to clean teeth

There are many synthetic bones and chew toys that are specially designed to strengthen your dog’s gums and teeth. Just make sure you’re providing safe objects for your dog to chew on. Hard objects can cause broken teeth.

Giving your dog a good bone to chew on can help get rid of build up and keep teeth strong, but imagine a human who only chews gum and uses mouth rinse. That’s not an effective means of ensuring good dental hygiene and overall health. The same is true for your dog.

Whether you brush your dog’s teeth or not, you should have a look inside their mouth every week or so. If you notice any of these signs of dental problems, then take your dog to the vet:

* Bad breath
* Change in eating or dog chewing habits
* Pawing at the face or mouth
* Depression
* Excessive drooling
* Misaligned or missing teeth
* Discolored, broken, missing or crooked teeth
* Red, swollen, painful or bleeding gums
* Yellowish-brown tartar crust along the gum line
* Bumps or growths within the mouth

Getting your pet’s teeth brushed is unnatural for dogs. To make this a positive experience, frequently remember to praise your dog. You can also reward them with treats after every session. This may seem counterintuitive because you’re cleaning teeth and then giving out a snack – however, the initial goal is to teach them to be comfortable with the teeth cleaning process. You can work on removing food from the equation at a later date…

By helping your dog maintain proper oral care, you can hopefully avoid all of the common oral conditions as stated above. Show your pet you care, and help them keep those teeth, gums and tongue clean.