



Lake Harriet Veterinary

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A GUIDE TO BRUSHING YOUR ANIMAL COMPANION'S TEETH

Our animal companions are an important part of our lives for many years and dental care is crucial to maintaining their good health. Dental disease is the most common problem seen in our pet population today. More than 85% of all dogs and cats over 3 years of age presented to veterinarians are affected by dental problems. Periodontal disease is the cause of your pet's bad breath and painful mouth, and may cause infections of the kidneys, liver, and heart.

We recommend daily dental care at home for your companion animals just like the rest of the family. It is best to begin home care at an early age (8-12 weeks), but visible tartar should be removed during a thorough dental cleaning. This makes your home care easier and more effective.

Supplies needed:

- *toothbrush
- *pet toothpaste (never human toothpaste)



Week 1: slowly acquainting your pet with mouth care:

Using your hand, gently open your animal companion's mouth and run your finger around the lips. Rub the outside of the mouth and massage the cheeks. This gets her used to having her mouth touched. Begin for thirty seconds on day one and progress to a couple of minutes by the end of the week. Reward your pet with a small treat at the end of each session.

Week 2: introducing toothbrush or washcloth (without toothpaste):

This week, use either a wet washcloth wrapped around your index finger or wet toothbrush on the teeth. Lift the lips and massage the outer surfaces of the upper and lower teeth using a back and forth motion. Do this for thirty seconds on day one and progress to three minutes by the end of the week.

Week 3: add toothpaste and extend brushing time:

This week, use your dental cleaning instrument and now add $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of toothpaste to brush the outer surfaces of the upper and lower teeth using a back and forth motion. If possible, try to brush the inner surfaces of the teeth. The inner surfaces are harder to get at but the tartar builds up more quickly on the outer surfaces. Always give a small treat at the end of each session...make it rewarding.

If you find brushing impossible there are other products you can use to maintain good oral health, but eventually we will recommend a professional dental cleaning.

*CET chews, Greenies, and other dental treats are available for dogs and cats. These are enzymatically treated to help remove bacteria before it builds up and turns to tartar that cannot be removed with simple brushing.

*Especially formulated dental diets are available for dogs and cats. These foods can be used as a regular complete diet or as a treat and we can write a prescription for you to pick these up at another clinic. If we think this is necessary for your pet we will discuss it with you.

*Some dogs may benefit from chewing on bones, however, you should realize this will increase their risk of tooth fractures and excessive wearing of the teeth.