

ORAL HOME HEALTH CARE

**** The most important step in keeping your pet's mouth healthy is brushing their teeth at home. There is no product on the market that takes the place of daily brushing. The following notes are meant to be used in combination with at home teeth brushing and annual/bi-annual professional dental cleanings by your veterinarian.**

1. What kind of toothbrush/toothpaste do I use for my pet?

-Your pet cannot use human toothpaste (due to some ingredients that he/she cannot swallow because of the risk of upset stomach, vomiting, etc). There are many pet-approved types of toothpaste including CET® brand products.

-You can use a pediatric soft toothbrush, or your veterinarian can recommend a pet-specific toothbrush.

2. How do I brush my pet's teeth?

The key to getting your pet to accept tooth brushing is to Go Slow! Pick a time when he/she is quiet and responsive. Start by having your pet lick the toothpaste off of your finger. Reward them with their favorite snack or toy. The next step (can be done the next day, or the next week, depending on how quickly your pet accepts the first step) is to have them lick the toothpaste off of the toothbrush. After this, introduce the toothbrush into their mouth. Then, do one stroke at a time until they are accepting a complete oral cleaning. The entire process of learning to accept tooth brushing should take about a month, but may take longer in some pets. Be sure to reward your pet every time. This should be a fun process for both you and your pet and should be done daily.

3. Are there foods that can help my pet's teeth?

Yes! The Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) has a list of them on their website www.vohc.org. These foods have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing some plaque and calculus formation.

Some examples:

1. Hill's Science Diet t/d ® and Oral Care®
2. Iams/Eukanuba® have many foods with "Dental Defense"
3. Purina also makes a dental-friendly diet

4. What about dental treats?

Hard treats can be beneficial, but they only help to clean the tips of the crown of the tooth. VOHC approved treats include:

1. Friskies® Cheweez® Beefhide Treats
2. Hartz® Flavor Infused Oral Chews, and Del Monte Tartar Check® Dog Biscuits

5. Do the products that are added to drinking water help my pet's oral health?

These products are designed to reduce halitosis (bad breath) by affecting the gases produced by the oral bacteria. None of these products actually reduce the bacterial load on the teeth. There are some concerns about the safety of these products and they should only be used under the direction of your veterinarian.

A list of some of these products includes:

1. Oxyfresh®,
2. Breathalyzer™ (imRex)
3. CET® AquaDent™ (Virbac)

6. Why aren't bones good for my dog?

With respect to the natural carnivore (meat eater), the function of the teeth in oral behavior is grasping, pulling and holding prey. This behavior is followed by cutting and tearing meat before crushing and gulping. These teeth are not designed to chew bones or other objects harder than the teeth. Fractured teeth are a problem of epidemic proportions in our domestic canine population.

*Strictly avoid cow hoofs, bones (both natural and manufactured), hard & thick rawhides, and other hard objects. If you can't dent it with your fingernail, the surface is too hard for your pet. The harder, heavier objects may damage or cause broken teeth.

7. What about the softer "chewable" products?

Digestible items do sometimes cause gastric disturbances or intestinal blockages. Discuss the products you are looking at purchasing with your veterinarian first. The following products are less likely to damage teeth or gums:

1. Flat rawhide chew like CET® Chews for Dogs and Cats (Virbac)
2. Chew-eez® (Friskies PetCare)
3. Milk Bones® (Nabisco)
4. Dentabone® (Pedigree Products-Kal Kan Petcare)
5. POPpup™ Potato Bone (Nylabone® Products)
6. hard rubber toys such as the CET® 5 Dental Exerciser™ (Virbac)

*Any object that is chewed obsessively will wear or fracture teeth (including tennis balls). Any dog may get into trouble with any chewable item especially if the wrong size is chosen or if the pet is not monitored.

8. Is there an oral rinse product available for my pet?

There are products available from your veterinarian. These products will be prescribed for your pet when necessary (usually given after periodontal therapy/ extractions are done).

Antiseptic solutions are designed for twice a day usage and the gold standard ingredient is 0.1% Chlorhexidine. This is the most effective antibacterial (also antiviral) agent that can be utilized in the mouth. The most common products used are:

1. Nolvadent™ (Fort Dodge) is a 0.1% solution of Chlorhexidine acetate
2. Peridex® (Proctor & Gamble) solution of 0.12% chlorhexadine gluconate
3. CET® Hexarinse™ (Virbac) solution of 0.12% chlorhexadine gluconate.

Another type of product contains zinc ascorbate. This has antiseptic properties, but also benefits gingival health by promoting collagen formation and epithelialization of ulcerated tissues. A list of some of these products includes:

1. Maxi/Guard™ Oral Zn® (Addison Biological Laboratory)
2. Maxi/Guard™ Oral Cleansing Formula (Addison Biological Laboratory)
3. CET® Oral Hygiene Rinse™ (Virbac)
4. CET® Oral Hygiene Gel™ (Virbac)

9. Is Oravet® a good option for my pet?

This product acts as a barrier to plaque formation on the tooth. It is very good, but only if applied on a weekly basis. Discuss with your veterinarian if this is a practical option for you and your pet. Like tooth brushing, most pets will allow you to apply this product if you go slow and allow them to become accustomed to it. This product is highly recommended for patients with stomatitis.