

# WHY YOUR PET'S DENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT



INTERMOUNTAIN  
PET HOSPITAL

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## KEEP YOUR PETS HEALTHY AND HAPPY

At Intermountain Pet Hospital, we know that good dental health doesn't just give your pets good breath and a better smile—it helps them stay healthier, overall.

By bringing your pet in for regular dental exams and cleanings and taking care of their teeth at home, you can help your dogs and cats live longer and happier lives. You can prevent tooth pain and harmful infections and improve their overall quality of life.

## WHY IS PET DENTAL HEALTH SO IMPORTANT?

We all know humans who complain about every toothache on social media. However, for animals, dental pain and infections aren't always easy to spot. Lots of dogs, for example, can keep eating and running around even through they are experiencing pain.



Regular dental care has benefits for the rest of your pet's body, too. Good oral health helps minimize stress on the heart, liver and other organs.

Here is some important information about dental disease in pets and what you can do to prevent it.

## WHAT CAUSES GUM (PERIODONTAL) DISEASE IN DOGS AND CATS?

Gum disease in animals has the same cause as gum disease in people. It's an infection caused by soft dental plaque building up on the teeth around the gums. This

plaque contains bacteria, which can irritate the gum tissue if the plaque keeps building up. Eventually, the bone around your pet's teeth can become infected.

Another cause for concern is hard dental tartar (or calculus), which forms when



calcium salts from your pet's saliva sticks to plaque. Tartar starts to form after a few days on the surface of a tooth that isn't kept clean. It creates a rough surface that makes it easy for even more plaque to build up. Once it starts getting thick, tartar is very hard to remove without dental instruments.

## WHAT EFFECTS DOES GUM DISEASE HAVE ON MY PET?

The symptom that most pet owners notice first is bad breath. Unfortunately, gum disease creates far bigger problems for the pet's health than for the owner's nose.

- Pain
- Tooth loss
- Health risks

Gum disease can harm the roots of your pet's teeth. Not only could their teeth become loose and fall out, but bacteria around



the roots could enter their bloodstream, leading to kidney, heart and liver damage.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

Now that you know about gum disease and its consequences, here are some steps you can take to keep your pet's teeth healthy:

### ROUTINE EXAMS

Take your dogs and cats to a veterinarian once a year for a professional dental exam. If deemed necessary a professional dental procedure will be recommended.

When you take your pet in for a full physical exam, the vet will also do a dental exam and should talk with you about different dental care options, including:

- Professional Dental Procedure under anesthesia
  - Full mouth dental radiographs
  - Dental Cleaning and Polishing
  - Dental Charting
  - Possible need for extractions or other dental treatments



- Dental Home Care to prevent problems in the future

It's important to note that radiographs on EVERY pet and EVERY tooth are essential for great dental health because 41% of dental disease occurs under the gum line. Without dental radiographs, veterinarians can't spot where the problems are.

## GOOD DENTAL HOME CARE

In addition to dental exams, the other crucial part of pet dental care is home care. There are four main techniques for taking care of your pet's teeth at home:

### 1) Brushing Teeth

With an 82% effectiveness rate for preventing dental disease, brushing your pets' teeth DAILY is your best home dental care option. You need to do it every day because it takes 24 hours for plaque to become calcified into tartar. Use a flavored toothpaste (CET toothpaste or



Petsmiles--VOHC-approved) to create a positive experience for your pet.

To enhance the benefits of brushing, even more, you may apply Maxigard Gel to your pet's teeth with your finger five minutes before brushing to loosen any plaque or tartar that has built up.

### 2) Dental Chews

Another good option is dental chews, which have a 70% effectiveness rate. As with brushing, you should give your pet chews every day for them to work. For dental chews to be effective, your pet needs to chew on it DAILY for at least 5-10 minutes. Here are some different types of dental chews:

- **Oravet:** Applies mechanical cleaning and sealant to your pet's teeth at the same time
- **Greenies:** Applies mechanical cleaning (VOHC-approved)
- **Treated Rawhide strips (CET):** Applies mechanical cleaning and a bacterial inhibitor
- **Nylabones:** Applies mechanical cleaning





- **Organic “natural” chews:** Includes raw bones, Bully sticks, pig ears and hooves

Generally speaking, the more you spend on a chew, the safer it is (less chance of broken teeth, obstructions, etc.).



### 3) Water Additive

Research shows that water additives are 55% effective in preventing dental disease in pets by preventing the growth of harmful bacteria. Mix it into their water every day. Two additives that IPH endorses are Oratene and Healthy Mouth (VOHC-approved). Both are available on our website online store.

### 4) Dental Diet

According to research, special dental diets in themselves are 39% effective in preventing dental disease. We recommend Science Diet T/D (VOHC-approved). Its large woven kibbles mechanically clean teeth while your pet chews. This needs to be the sole diet to be effective. Using it occasionally as a treat does little good.

## WHAT TO ASK YOUR VETERINARIAN

Before you have a vet do any dental procedure for your pet, here are some good questions to ask:

### 1) How involved do you get in procedures?

Veterinarians are 100% responsible for the pets under their care. They need to prescribe the anesthetic that each pet receives, which will vary depending on the animal's age, breed and health conditions. A vet also needs to oversee all aspects of the procedure.

### 2) Do you have a nurse on staff to monitor anesthesia during dental cleanings?

Many veterinary hospitals will have the same person perform dental cleanings and monitor anesthesia. They do this to save money, and unfortunately, it can cost you the life of your pet.

You simply can't do two jobs, to the best of your abilities, at once. This is especially true when it







comes to administering anesthesia—when pets die while under anesthesia, it's usually because someone needs to multi-task. Your veterinarian should have a nurse on staff to watch over the anesthesia and address any problems that arise (make sure they have top-notch equipment too).

### 3) Do you have certified and/or well-trained technicians who can perform cleanings?

Human dental hygienists need specialized training to perform cleanings properly. The same goes for pet dental hygienists.

### 4) Do you take full-mouth radiographs on every pet, every time?

As we mentioned earlier, radiographs are a crucial part of good dental care because 41% of dental disease will be missed with a radiograph; leading to pain and infected teeth in your pets.

You shouldn't need to pay for a procedure—not to mention one that potentially puts your pet at risk—and have it prove ineffective. Your veterinarian should take

full-mouth radiographs (not just certain teeth) on every pet. The more radiographs that a vet takes, the better chances they'll have to diagnose diseases correctly.



### 5) Do you give instructions for home dental care?

Each pet owner should get detailed, customized and written instructions for giving their animals dental care at home.

### 6) Do you have or give recommendations for VOHC-approved dental products?

Your vet should be able to provide or recommend products that meet objective, measurable standards for reducing plaque and tartar in dogs and cats. Dental care products with the VOHC seal of approval have undergone rigorous testing and been found safe and effective.





## BOTTOM LINE

By taking care of your pets' teeth, you can go a long way towards giving them better lives. Have trained, knowledgeable professionals give them dental exams and work with you to maintain good dental health. Taking these steps ensures that you and your pets have many years of companionship.



# SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY



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