



A guide to looking after your dog's teeth





Veterinarians and owners are becoming increasingly aware of the many benefits in prevention, and when necessary, treatment of the most commonly seen infectious disease seen in our pets - periodontitis (gum disease). In addition, there are many other oral conditions that can really impact a pet's quality of life.

Many of the problems that develop in the oral cavity are associated with the formation of plaque. Plaque is a sticky layer coating the teeth and effective control of plaque formation is based around mechanical cleaning, tooth brushing with a quality brush ideally every day.

This information sheet is developed by the experts at WALTHAM, following their extensive research, and the benefit of their practical experience. It will arm you with the information you need to tackle these often hidden diseases, at their cause. Your veterinary team will always be available to help so please ask them at your pet's annual examination.

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Getting to know your Dogs' teeth

Dogs don't just use their teeth to eat. They're also essential tools, for carrying things, playing, tugging, chewing and living life to the full.

Like humans, dogs are born without teeth and deciduous (temporary / milk teeth) also precede their permanent teeth.

A puppy's deciduous teeth start to erupt through the gums at just 2-3 weeks old. A puppy will have a full set of 28 deciduous teeth by 12 weeks of age.

Just a few weeks later, at 16 weeks old, the roots of deciduous teeth start to be resorbed, this makes them become loose and fall out in order to make space for the permanent adult teeth.

Deciduous teeth are often swallowed but you may notice them in bedding or on the floor. Sometimes deciduous teeth can be retained, in which case you should take your puppy to be checked by a vet as they may need to be removed.

Your puppy will have a full set of 42 adult teeth from 6-8 months of age.

A healthy mouth depends on healthy teeth and gums so owners should have their dog's teeth checked regularly by a vet or vet nurse and establish a daily oral care routine from about 4 months of age.

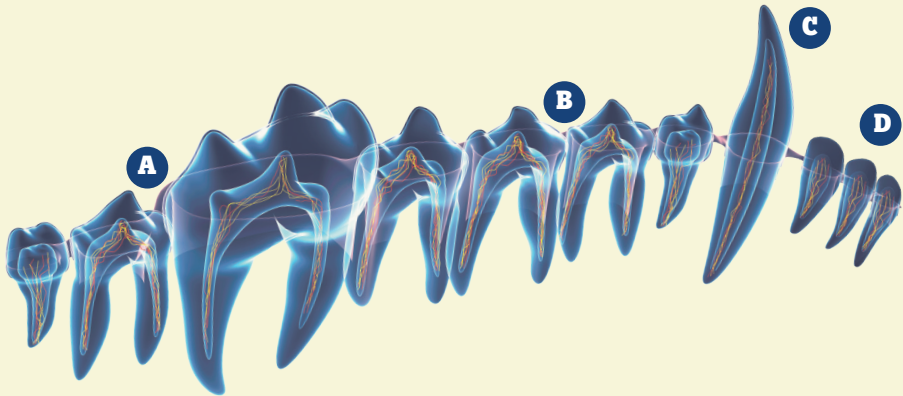


Find out your dog's risk of gum disease

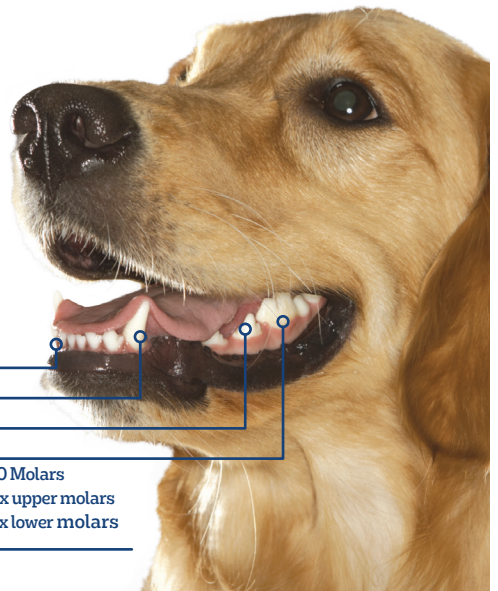
www.uk.pedigree.com/gum-disease-risk-checker

Types of teeth and their purpose

Adult dogs have 42 teeth. Each tooth is shaped and positioned in the jaw to deliver a function to the animal:



- A Molars:** These teeth are positioned towards the back of the jaw and are used for crushing and grinding.
- B Premolars:** These teeth are used for tearing and chewing - when using these teeth, dogs and cats often tilt their head to one side.
- C Canines:** These teeth are used for holding objects in their mouths and for puncturing.
- D Incisors:** These teeth are at the front of the jaw and are used for nibbling and are especially useful for stripping meat when eating and for grooming their coat.



12 Incisors
6x upper jaw (maxilla)
6x lower jaw (mandible)

4 Canines
2x upper jaw
2x lower jaw

16 Premolars
8x upper jaw
8x lower jaw

10 Molars
4x upper molars
6x lower molars

Why oral care in dogs is important

Gum disease is the most common disease in adult dogs. The disease begins when bacteria stick to the surface of your dog's teeth.

The bacteria on the teeth form an off-white, sticky layer called dental plaque. If the plaque isn't removed it hardens to form tartar (a brown, rough deposit on the teeth) within days.

The bacteria within plaque and tartar attack the gums and cause inflammation of the gum tissue. Plaque damages the gum tissues and then the other structures which attach the teeth (such as ligaments and bone). This is a painful process and if left untreated, the tooth will become loose and eventually 'fall out'. Dogs are stoic animals and they hide pain well, providing an oral care regime at home and having your pet's mouth checked regularly by your vet or vet nurse, can help to prevent this condition.

Spotting the signs:

Bad breath

Bad breath in dogs is not normal and is almost always a sign of underlying gum problems.

Bleeding gums

Bleeding or inflamed (red or swollen) gums are a major sign of gum disease.

Behaviour

A dog which becomes less lively, less sociable or less willing to play is usually thought to be due to "just getting old" when actually it is the result of the effects of gum disease. These changes in general behaviour can be subtle and increase gradually over a prolonged time which adds to the confusion. It is frequently noticed that a pet acts as if it is years younger shortly after having dental treatment. Your dog may also be reluctant to have his head or face touched. This can be a sign that there are sore teeth or gums.

It is not always easy to spot gum disease but taking a close look at the teeth and gums weekly is a good start



Healthy teeth and gums



Early signs of gum disease

©Banfield, The Pet Hospital

How to brush your dog's teeth

Brushing your dog's teeth regularly is a great way to keep his gums and teeth healthier and fight gum disease. Introducing tooth brushing gradually will mean he will learn to enjoy the experience.

Some important tips before you get started:

Keep each session short – from a few seconds to a maximum of a couple of minutes.

Pick a time which suits your daily routine and try to keep it as your usual time to brush. It doesn't matter when in the day you do the brushing.

Repeat each stage daily until your dog is comfortable with it and then for a few more days beyond. Then you can move on to the next stage. You may do the established stage first and then continue into the new stage when introducing a new stage.

Every dog is different – so train at a pace which suits your dog. You can always go back a stage.

Give lots of praise and a reward but only for good behaviour.

Continued overleaf...



What you will need;

- A tooth brush with medium bristles and the correct size:
 - Medium and large dogs – adult (people) size
 - Small dogs – child's size brush
 - Toy or miniature dogs – small special pet tooth brush.
- Pet Toothpaste (do not use human tooth paste).
- A quiet place without distractions.
- A little time and patience.

Take care when putting your fingers into your dog's mouth. We don't recommend doing so if your dog is likely to bite or become aggressive.



Step-by-step guide to tooth brushing



1. Introducing the pet toothpaste

- Smear a small amount of toothpaste on your finger tip. Allow your dog to lick the toothpaste. He should like the taste and be keen to eat it.



2. Getting him used to something in his mouth

- Place some toothpaste on your finger tip.
- With your other hand gently hold his muzzle to keep the mouth mostly closed.
- Insert your finger under the top lip on the side of the face.
- Rub your finger tip on the teeth.
- Don't allow the mouth to open or you may get your finger chewed.
- Slide your finger further back inside the cheeks (do not do this if there is any risk that you could be bitten). If your dog won't sit still when you hold his muzzle, you should seek some behavioural advice.



3. Introducing the toothbrush - canine teeth to begin with

- Wet the toothbrush with water and add some toothpaste then push it down into the bristles.
- Hold his muzzle to keep the mouth gently closed. This is to stop chewing when the brush is introduced.
- Lift the top lip on one side of the mouth (with a finger tip or thumb of the hand holding the muzzle).
- Gently brush the canine teeth - these are the longest teeth.
- Change your hold on the muzzle to lift the lip on the other side, then brush the canine teeth on this side.

Tip: Do not start with the incisor teeth at the front of the mouth as this is a more sensitive area of the mouth.



4. Brushing the teeth further back

- After brushing the canine teeth, continue on to brush the teeth further back in the mouth.
- To get to the molar teeth you will need to slip the brush past the corner of the lips inside the cheeks.
- **Tip:** Try a smaller brush if you struggle to get inside the cheek.
- Brush the upper teeth first and then allow the mouth to open slightly to be able to brush just along the gum line of the lower teeth.
- Remember; Increase the brushing gradually and stop if your dog is reacting more than a little bit.



5. Brushing all the teeth

- Brush the canine and back teeth on both sides (as before).
- Now lift the top lip at the front of the mouth (still holding the mouth closed) and brush the incisors.
- You are now brushing the outside of all the teeth. You may want to brush for a little longer to do a more thorough cleaning.
- For the best results brushing should be at least once a day.

Top tips to help keep your dog's teeth and gums healthy

1. Provide a daily dental care routine. Ideally start as a puppy. Tooth brushing is the single most effective method but you may be still want to combine several different methods.
2. If your dog is already older, you should still begin daily dental care. Have the mouth checked to be sure all is well before starting.
3. Make sure that your dog gets an oral health examination by a veterinary professional at least once a year.
4. Provide chews and toys which are recommended as safe for dogs. Do not allow your dog to chew on hard or abrasive objects (such as bones, hard nylon chew toys or tennis balls) – these often damage teeth and gums.
5. Use dental chews scientifically proven to reduce plaque and tartar build up.



[†]Source: Nielsen RMS Total Coverage MAT 14/11/20. † In a November 2014 survey, of 2786 UK and RoI vets who responded, 68% recommend DentaStix™ as being good for dog oral health.

