

Background Information

Food particles left on teeth after eating are broken down by bacteria to form plaque. Over time, plaque hardens into tartar, which is visible as a brown crust on the teeth.



Plaque Accumulation on a Canine Tooth

Tartar also accumulates under the gums, where it causes gingivitis (red, irritated gums) and eventually periodontal disease (infection-induced loss of attachment of tooth roots to tooth socket).

By age 3, more than 75% of dogs and cats have gingivitis or periodontal disease. Periodontal disease causes discomfort, bad breath, tooth loss, and can potentially contribute to diseases of the heart valves, kidneys, liver, and immune system.



Gingivitis above the Upper Fourth Premolar

Cats (and rarely dogs) develop a unique type of dental disease called Oral Resorptive Lesions. These are painful cavities, usually on the side teeth, often near the gum line. These

are not caused by bacterial decay as human cavities are.

Additional problems encountered include fractured or mis-aligned teeth, retained “baby” teeth, foreign bodies, and oral tumors.



Retained Deciduous Tooth

Services Provided

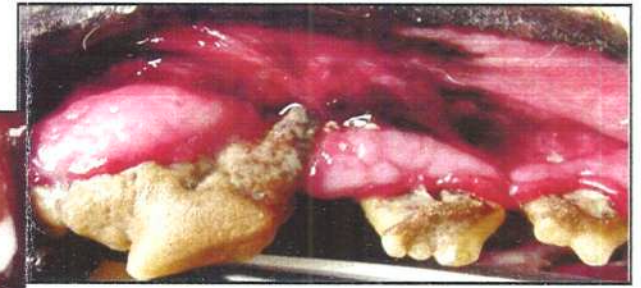
Routine dental cleanings are recommended as soon as gingivitis becomes apparent, or if a large amount of tartar is present without gingivitis. Gingivitis is the last completely reversible stage of dental disease, so teeth should be cleaned *before* periodontal disease develops.



X-ray of Periodontal Disease

Depending on your pet's tendency to form tartar, and the frequency of home dental care, dental cleanings are usually needed every one to two years. A routine cleaning includes general anesthesia, thorough scaling of tartar above and below the gum line, polishing, and fluoride treatment.

Dental x-rays are recommended to more completely assess any teeth that have potential problems below the gumline.



Severe Periodontal Disease

For patients that have developed periodontal disease, we have “periocetic”, an antibiotic resin that helps to reduce the need for future extractions. Teeth with severe periodontal disease usually must be removed.

For dogs particularly prone to periodontal disease, we recommend a vaccine that has been shown to reduce progression of the disease.

Oravet is a barrier sealant that significantly reduces plaque accumulation. After professional application, it must be re-applied weekly at home.



Fractured Canine Tooth

Fractured teeth are most often removed to prevent root abscesses and alleviate pain. However, if this is undesirable, otherwise healthy fractured teeth can be treated by referral to a veterinary dentist for root canal surgery.

Services Provided Continued



Feline Oral Resorptive Lesion

Oral Resorptive Lesions are not repairable. These teeth are removed to alleviate pain and allow the associated gingivitis to heal. Occasionally, many or

all of the side teeth are affected, requiring multiple extractions.

Retained deciduous (baby) teeth and severely displaced teeth cause problems for adjacent normal teeth and are removed. Moderately displaced teeth may be corrected with a referral to a veterinary dentist.



Displaced Lower Incisors

Any other problems detected during a routine cleaning (oral injuries, tumors) are treated as indicated.

Dental cleanings and other services are done with general anesthesia, so your pet will need to spend the day in the hospital. It is important that you be available by phone in case dental problems are identified.

Home Care

Brushing daily to three times a week with pet toothpaste is the best way to prevent dental disease. Most patients will still need occasional professional cleanings in-hospital, but the frequency can be reduced, and the number of teeth lost to periodontal disease between cleanings can be minimized.

Dental Care for Dogs and Cats

