

Dental Care

Why Is Cat Dental Care So Important?

For a long time, most people, and even most vets didn't think about cat dental care. It was just a natural thing if your cat lost or broke a tooth—no big deal, right? Well, not so much. By the time cats are four years old, between 50 and 90 percent have some form of dental disease.

Dental disease hurts!

Cats feel pain just the same as we do, so trust me, if their teeth are nasty, they really hurt, too! If you've ever had dental pain—whether it was from an abscessed tooth, losing a filling, breaking a tooth, or whatever—you know that it's some of the worst pain you can experience. If you don't want your feline friend to suffer, cat dental care is crucial.

Dental disease can kill your cat

Just as with humans, bacteria from a cat's diseased mouth can infiltrate the bloodstream and cause damage to the kidneys, liver, heart, and other organs. Dental disease also has relationships to other diseases such as diabetes and kidney failure; for example, an ongoing infection in your cat's mouth could make his diabetes harder to regulate.

Brushing Your Cat's Teeth

Follow this four-week training program to get your cat comfortable with daily brushing.

You will need:

- A cat toothbrush
- Feline toothpaste (human toothpaste is not safe for cats)
- Rewards (either an edible treat or a drink from her favorite water faucet)

Week 1:

Let your cat become familiar with the smell of the toothpaste. Leave the brush and toothpaste out where the cat can inspect them. Every day, put a dab on your finger, and let him or her smell and lick it. If your cat is shy about tasting it, put a tiny dab near his or her mouth so he or she can lick it off. Give a reward when your cat licks the toothpaste so he or she associates the toothpaste with an enjoyable experience.

Week 2:

Get your cat used to the taste of the toothpaste. Apply a dab of toothpaste to one of his or her canine teeth every day, followed by a reward.

Week 3:

Get your cat used to the toothbrush. Put a small amount of toothpaste on the brush and let him or her lick it off. If he or she is shy about licking it, apply a dab near the mouth. Follow with a reward.

Week 4:

Gently stretch your cat's lips far enough to insert the brush gently between the lips and gums. Place the bristles at a 45 degree angle to the teeth, aiming for the narrow crevice between teeth and gums. Brush around gently, and work around the upper and lower teeth. It's only necessary to brush the outside surfaces, as the cat's own tongue cleans the inside surfaces well.