

# CLIENT DENTISTRY INFORMATION SHEET

Dental health is just as important in pets as it is in humans. Pets with bad or unclean teeth can develop **periodontal disease** (the disease of the gums and subgingival tissues surrounding the teeth), which affects all of your pet's body systems. It is known to be related to the development of heart, liver and kidney disease. However, dental disease is easily preventable with the proper prevention and treatment. This document serves as an informational piece only and is not intended to replace an exam by a qualified veterinarian.

Here is what we recommend:



## Yearly Dental Cleanings

Dental cleanings allow veterinarians to identify tartar buildup, worn teeth, and broken or damaged teeth. Cleanings typically begin around age 2 and should continue annually, depending on how quickly tartar accumulates on your pet's teeth. Small breed dogs and greyhounds are genetically predisposed to poor dental health and may require more frequent cleanings. In contrast, large breed dogs tend to build up tartar more slowly and may need fewer cleanings.

Professional dental cleanings include sedation, scaling, and full-mouth X-rays, and may involve dental repairs or extractions for diseased or damaged teeth. Dental X-rays are essential for proper diagnosis and treatment. Cats are prone to Feline Oral Resorptive Lesions (FORL), which are similar to cavities. These lesions often dissolve tooth crowns and roots, leading to the need for extraction. Cats may also develop stomatitis, a severe inflammatory response to tartar buildup that affects the gums and can cause anorexia due to oral pain.

Annual dental exams and recommended cleanings are vital for maintaining your pet's overall health and wellness.



## At-Home Maintenance

At-home care is essential for extending the time between dental cleanings and maintaining a healthy, happy pet. Between professional cleanings, brush your pet's teeth daily using enzymatic toothpaste approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC), if possible.

Dental chews are another effective way to help reduce tartar buildup while also serving as a tasty treat. These chews are specially shaped and textured to help remove plaque and debris as your pet chews. Additionally, prescription dental diet kibble can be used as treats to support oral health and hygiene.

[See page 4 for more details on developing a home maintenance plan.](#)



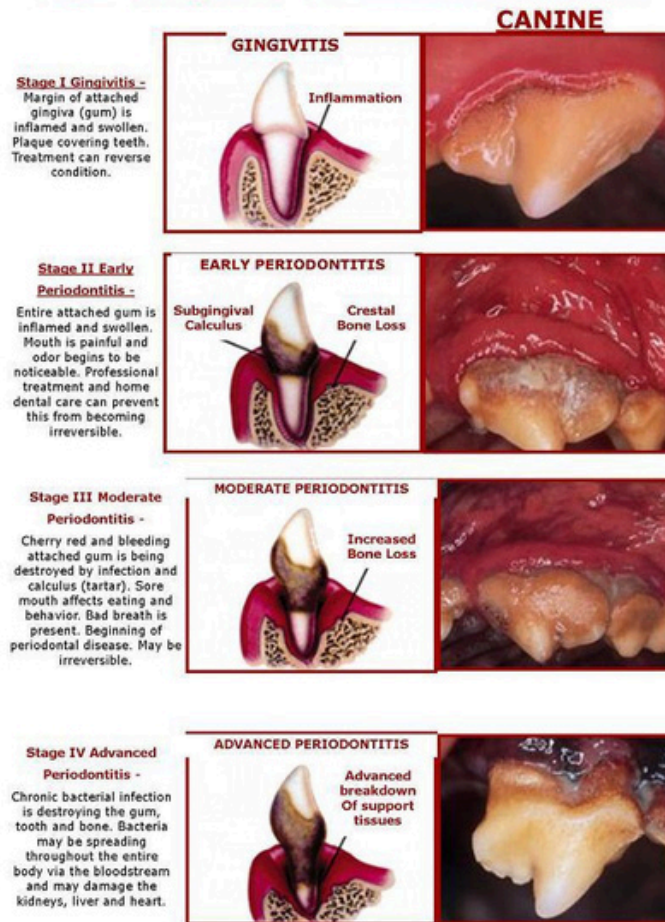
## Avoid “this”

Tooth enamel is the hardest substance in the body. Because of your pet’s strong bite force, chewing on anything harder than enamel can lead to cracked or broken teeth. Avoid giving your pet ice, rocks, sticks, antlers, animal bones, hooves, plastic, or nylon bones.

Chew toys are generally safe if they soften as your pet chews. Good options include beef hide, rubber toys, plush toys without stuffing, and dental chews. A good rule of thumb is to limit chewing sessions to no more than 20 minutes at a time.



### Four Stages of Periodontal Disease



**Stage 1 Periodontal Disease:** Anesthetic dental prophylaxis, including full mouth dental x-rays is recommended and then initiating thorough home dental care routine to continue to keep your pet's teeth healthy. This includes brushing, enzymatic water additive, and dental chews.

**Stage 2 Periodontal Disease:** Anesthetic dental prophylaxis, including full mouth dental x-rays is recommended and then initiating thorough home dental care routine. This includes brushing, enzymatic water additive, dental chews, and a dental care diet. Without appropriate treatment, this will progress to more permanent disease. There can be up to 25% bone loss associated with Stage 2 Periodontal disease!

**Stage 3 Periodontal Disease:** Recommend professional anesthetic dental prophylaxis, including full mouth dental x-rays, and probable extractions. Once gums have healed, will need to initiate aggressive home dental care and recommend annual dental evaluations. Studies in dogs have shown that periodontal disease is associated with microscopic changes in the heart, liver, and kidneys. Also, 20-50% of bone loss around the teeth is likely present.

**Stage 4 Periodontal Disease:** Recommend professional anesthetic dental prophylaxis, full mouth dental x-rays. Multiple teeth are likely to be mobile and abscessed with 50% or more bone loss, and will likely require extraction. The oral infection may have spread to heart, liver, and kidneys. Once gums have healed, you will need to initiate thorough home dental care. Annual to bi-annual dental prophylaxis is recommended.

*Dental disease is one of the most common health issues we see in dogs and cats, yet it is completely preventable. Home dental care is the center of their oral health and should be initiated early in life.*

### Professional Anesthetic Dental Prophylaxis:

Once there is visible dental disease, an anesthetic dental cleaning is the best place to start. Your pet will have a pre-anesthetic exam, pre-anesthetic bloodwork, IV catheter, IV fluids, extensive anesthetic monitoring, ultrasonic scaling, and polishing. Your veterinarian will then probe and chart the teeth and take x-rays as indicated. The goal of anesthetic dental cleanings is to keep your pet's teeth healthy for life.

### Home Dental Care Action Plan:

**1. Brushing:** This is the most effective, but most difficult home dental care therapy. Brushing should be done daily.

- Step 1: Be realistic; there is a learning curve for both you and your pet. Reward your pet through the process, be patient. Practice lifting their lip to see their teeth and reward.
- Step 2: Toothpaste-wrap your finger in gauze. Lift the lip and gently rub toothpaste on the gum. Find a flavor your pet really likes!
- Step 3: Introduce toothbrush. Use a small amount of toothpaste and gently start brushing.
- Step 4: Brush the teeth and gums. 30 seconds per side on both top and bottom, so 2 minutes total. Brush the outside of the teeth as this is the area most prone to tartar build up. Offer praise and reward when done! .

**2. Drinking water additive:** Helps reduce the bacteria in the mouth that forms plaque. Oral rinses are also available!

**3. Dental chews:** Find a product that your pet enjoys and takes the time to chew. If they don't chew, it won't benefit your pet!

**4. Hill's t/d** (prescription only) or Science Diet oral care(OTC). This food is palatable, nutritionally balanced, and effective at reducing tartar.