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## PET DENTAL CARE

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**Preventive Dental Care** is one of the most neglected pet health needs. Yet it is just as important for your pet as it is for you. While cavities do occur in both dogs and cats, periodontal (gum) disease is the most common and serious pet dental problem.

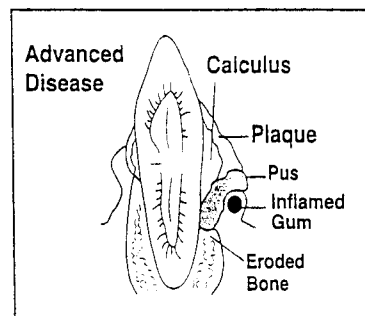
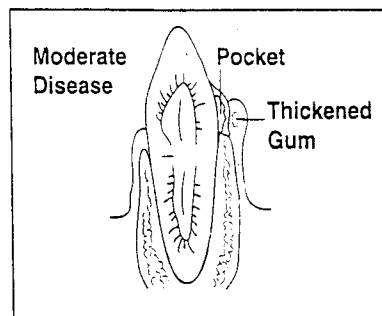
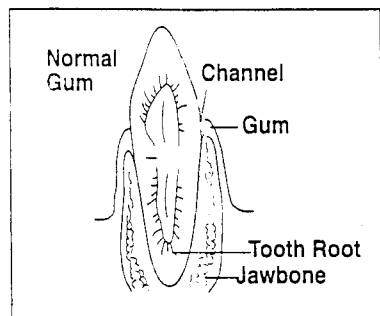
**Periodontal Disease** is caused by a build-up of plaque and calculus below the gumline. Plaque, a sticky, colorless, bacteria-laden film forms continuously on teeth. Gums recede as calculus builds up, forming bacteria-filled pockets.

**Bacteria** infects gum tissue, the roots of teeth, and erodes bone that secures teeth. Eventually teeth fall out. Bacteria is carried throughout the body by a large network of blood vessels near gums and teeth. An accumulation of bacteria can weaken your pet's resistance to illness.

**Warning Signs.** Many pets suffer in silence with dental disease. Others show acute pain while eating. Some pets act depressed. BAD BREATH and drooling are frequent signs of dental disease. Teeth are normally white and smooth. Healthy gums are pink, smooth and adhere tightly to teeth. Diseased gums are thickened, reddened and bleed easily. If any warning sign is present, your pet needs veterinary attention.

**Treatment** for most pets requires having your veterinarian scale (remove) calculus at and beneath the gumline. Polishing smooths tooth surfaces to reduce bacteria growth.

**Home Care**, coupled with regular pet dental exams and scaling and polishing as recommended by your veterinarian, will make a significant improvement in your pet's health, longevity and happiness.



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## HOME CARE

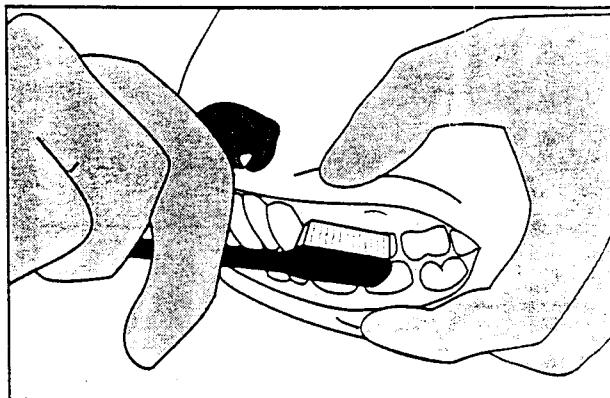
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**Removing Plaque** before it hardens is the most important step in preventing periodontal disease. Feeding a proper diet, including some dry or crunchy food, stimulates gums and helps clean exposed tooth surfaces. Brushing your pet's teeth regularly (at least twice a week) reduces plaque and calculus buildup at and beneath the gumline.

**Start Slowly** by gently handling your pet's mouth. Massage along the cheek-side of the tooth and gumline with your finger. If your pet resists, calmly stroke and reassure him or her. Try again. Make this a comfortable relaxing time for both of you.

**When** your pet accepts handling of its mouth, wrap cloth or gauze around your index finger to wipe plaque from cheek-side tooth surfaces and gumline. After your pet is used to the cloth or gauze, you may add a little special pet toothpaste available from your veterinarian. Never use human toothpaste. Pets can't spit it out and it may cause stomach upset.

**After** your pet accepts the cloth or gauze, start brushing with a special soft-bristle pet toothbrush available from your veterinarian. Gently hold the mouth closed with one hand. Lift the lip on one side and brush cheek-side surfaces of teeth and gumline. This is where salivary glands are located and many of the problems occur.



**Praise** your pet often and give occasional rewards for cooperation. The entire dental care routine should take only a few minutes.

**People can choose their own level of oral hygiene...pets must depend on their owner.**