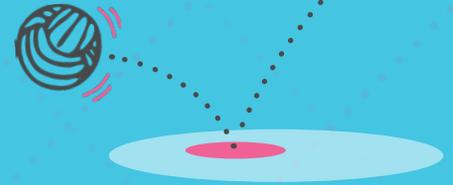


FIVE COMMON TOYS THAT CAN DAMAGE YOUR DOG'S TEETH

Not all pet toys are equal. Some common pet toys can actually damage teeth over time, especially if your dog is an aggressive chewer. Here is a list of toys to watch out for.



1. TENNIS BALLS

It might be surprising to hear that tennis balls can damage your pet's teeth, but it all comes down to moderation. A game of fetch or play is not a problem, but if your dog is the type to obsessively chew on a ball for long periods of time, this can cause long-term [abrasion and wearing](#) of the teeth.

2. BONES

Dogs love bones, but all types of bones — cooked, uncooked, or synthetic — can actually be quite dangerous. Pieces of brittle bone can splinter in your dog's mouth and [enter the digestive tract](#). Bones can also cause an effect called "table-wearing," which occurs when a tooth's surface flattens over time. Nylon bones, which don't offer enough give upon chewing or compression, may cause tooth fractures.

Edible bones (like Greenies) or ingestible "treat" bones might be a good alternative. If you insist on giving your dog a bone, opt for a marrow bone or something large that can't be swallowed.

3. ICE CUBES

Chewing anything hard over time will wear down tooth enamel or cause breakage ([cracks or chips](#)), which is why you shouldn't feed your dog ice cubes regularly. Ice cubes can also quickly become choking hazards.

4. ROPE TOYS

Rope toys that are easily destructible shed string that can wedge between your pet's teeth or under their tongue. String that is ingested can create life-threatening intestinal impactions in your dog's digestive tract.

5. STICKS

Sticks, though seemingly innocuous, can splinter and cause gum damage. They are also easily ingested yet not always digestible, and may put your pet at risk of [intestinal impaction](#) or toxicity, depending on the plant type.

DENTAL SCORING CHART



WHAT IS PERIODONTAL DISEASE?

Periodontal disease, also known as periodontitis, is the inflammation of the tissue around the teeth. It occurs when gingivitis (the inflammation of the gums) gets severe enough for tartar (the buildup of plaque) to get into the pockets in between the gums and the teeth. Periodontal disease will not only cause oral discomfort/pain and bad breath, but will also cause a magnitude of health issues including but not limited to: oral cancer, tooth root abscesses, oronasal fistulas, jaw fractures, and more. It is very important to brush and care for your pet's teeth as much as you can. Remember, humans are expected to brush their teeth twice a day. Imagine if we went months or years without brushing our teeth! Keep on brushing!

GRADES OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE:

GRADE 0:



Clean and healthy teeth, no gingivitis or plaque is apparent.

GRADE 1:



Light plaque on teeth as well as mild gingivitis (shows as slight reddening of the gum line). If plaque is not controlled it will continue to build up, resulting in tartar development. This can often still be reversed with proper and routine brushing.

GRADE 2:



Moderate tartar buildup has formed as a result of bacteria and plaque not being cleaned off the teeth. Gingivitis is now present on multiple tooth gum lines and is true to its name of inflamed gums. This can cause discomfort for the animal but progression can be stopped and will be much less substantial after a dental cleaning. Without treatment and care, gingivitis can cause loss of multiple tooth bones and create pockets for plaque to infiltrate, which will progress into periodontitis. Plaque build-up can also lead to further systemic issues for pets if gone untreated.

GRADE 3:



Tartar buildup is heavy and bone loss is apparent on radiographs. Gingivitis has now progressed into periodontitis causing oral discomfort. Fractures may be covered by the tartar and teeth may need to be extracted. Without the intervention of a dental cleaning, periodontitis will worsen resulting in more extractions; worsened periodontal disease can cause the pet's overall health to decline.

GRADE 4:



Severe tartar build up is apparent, gums are seriously inflamed and lifted, periodontal disease is very visible with severe bone loss (over 50%), and the pet is displaying signs of oral discomfort (common to see anorexia in pets at this point). This stage calls for not only a dental cleaning but also almost always extractions. Without a dental cleaning procedure, the teeth and gums will decay even further causing severe oral pain and awful breath. This infection can also travel through the bloodstream and cause problems in other parts of the body.

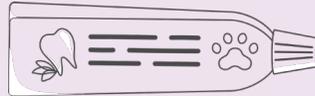
Important to Note: Cats have special dental needs, and can have a disease known as Feline Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions. This disease is extremely painful, and while it can be diagnosed if the lesion is above the gumline, these lesions often begin below the gumline. Please consult with your veterinarian to ensure that your cat's dental health needs are met.

CONCERNED YOUR PET IS SHOWING SIGNS OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE? SCAN THE QR CODE TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR VETERINARIAN WITH THE PETDESK APP.



HOW TO BRUSH YOUR PET'S TEETH

Good dental health is essential to your pet's overall wellness. Here's how to introduce your dog (or cat) to getting their teeth brushed. Make sure that any product you use is approved by the [Veterinary Oral Health Council \(VOHC\)](#) or your veterinarian.



1. CHOOSE A PALATABLE TOOTHPASTE

Introduce your pet to a palatable pet-safe toothpaste like one that is beef- or poultry-flavored. Let your pet taste a small amount of the toothpaste off of your finger and offer positive reinforcement. Repeat this once a day for several days. Never use human toothpaste for your pet, as it can contain dangerous ingredients like [xylitol](#).

2. USE A 360° FINGER BRUSH

360° finger brushes are great for getting your pet used to regular cleanings. Start by putting some toothpaste on the brush (while it is on your finger) and let your pet taste it. Slowly introduce the finger brush into their cheeks. Brush any teeth that you can make contact with gently. Offer positive reinforcement and repeat this once a day for several days. It is especially important to introduce puppies to this technique early so that they will be more tolerant of having their teeth brushed as adults.



REMINDER

Never use anything to brush your pet's teeth that can be accidentally inhaled or swallowed. A finger brush should be snug enough so that it cannot fall off or get pulled off of your finger.

3. GRADUATE TO A TOOTHBRUSH

Once your pet accepts the finger brush, advance them to a [pet-safe toothbrush](#). These brushes are specifically designed for pet mouths and will allow you to reach the back molars. Work swiftly with the toothbrush and offer your dog (or cat) positive reinforcement as you go. Never force your pet to do anything that makes them uncomfortable.



4. TRY DENTAL CARE ALTERNATIVES

For really stubborn pets (or cats), try using a daily vet-approved [dental care water additive](#). Pet-safe dental water additives are great for pets that hate to have their teeth brushed. These additives can combat bad breath, plaque, and tartar, and come in a variety of enticing flavors. Make sure to follow all directions on the product label.



HOW TO FIX TEETHING BEHAVIOR IN PUPPIES AND KITTENS

Puppies and kittens go through an important teething stage between [3 weeks to 6 months](#) and [10 weeks to 6 months](#) of age, respectively. Find out how to offer your puppy or kitten much-needed teething relief and teach them appropriate household behaviors.

OFFER PLENTY OF TOYS



Offer your puppy or kitten plenty of pet-safe and age-appropriate toys, or else they will explore anything and everything with their mouths [for relief and out of curiosity](#). Analyze the materials and quality of the toys you buy, and avoid anything potentially dangerous, like toys with ingestible string, small parts, or hazardous materials (batteries).

PUPPY- OR KITTEN-PROOF YOUR HOUSE

Hide all electrical cords, shreddable or ingestible objects, and anything that poses an entanglement risk. Alternatively, you can create a designated safe area for your pet to play in (e.g., with a baby pen or baby gate) or introduce them to crate-training if they will be unsupervised for a short period of time.

REDIRECT UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR

Teach your pet not to chew on household items that aren't theirs and never let them chew on your hands. If your puppy or kitten is chewing on something they shouldn't, give a gentle but firm "No" and offer them a toy. Most will latch onto the toy right away and carry on as if nothing ever happened. Give your pet positive reinforcement as they engage with the toy.

Note: Never offer your hands as "play" objects. This teaches your pet that it is ok to bite hands, even if done playfully, and will become problematic as they get older.

BE POSITIVE AND KIND



There is an important distinction between gentle discipline and scolding. It is ok to give your pet a gentle yet firm correction, but any form of harsh discipline, intimidation, or punishment will make your pet fearful and [damage your relationship](#) with them. Punishment can even escalate the behaviors you are trying to diminish. Always be patient, and allow your pet time to learn.

Pet Dental Cleaning FAQ

Frequently asked questions about veterinary dental cleanings and treatments for cats and dogs.

Why Is Anesthesia Required for My Pet's Dental?

- Prevents anxiety, discomfort, and/or pain that might be experienced if awake
- Safeguards your pet and veterinary staff from injury
- Allows your veterinarian to perform a thorough oral exam
- Allows the team to perform dental radiographs
- Prevents aerosolized bacteria and debris from being inhaled or swallowed

Note: Bloodwork is often required prior to anesthesia to address underlying health issues that might require further support before, during, or after the procedure.

Why Does My Pet Need Radiographs (X-Rays)?

Dental X-rays allow the veterinary team to see what is going on below the gum line, such as issues with tooth structures, tooth roots, ligaments, and bones (i.e., the jaw). Anesthesia is also required to capture precise and accurate radiographs due to the difficulty of the image angles.

What Happens During a Dental Cleaning?

Your pet will be intubated, anesthetized, and monitored. A dental technician will use a scaler (ultrasonic scaler or hand scaler) and a curette to remove tartar and plaque from above and below the gumline. Thereafter, they will polish the teeth and proceed with any additional treatments, such as extractions.

Why Does My Pet Need Extractions?

Extractions involve removal of the teeth and are recommended for a number of reasons, including:

- misalignment, which can cause malocclusion (issues closing the mouth);
- extra teeth (i.e., retained baby teeth), which cause overcrowding and excessive tartar and plaque buildup;
- disease, such as stomatitis or tooth resorption in cats, which causes painful ulcers and abscesses; and
- fractured, damaged, or decaying teeth that are infected, painful, and cannot be repaired.

In severe cases, mouth bacteria from infections can enter the bloodstream and affect the heart, liver, and kidneys.

Diagnosis and At-Home Care

Your veterinarian will provide instructions for at-home care following your pet's diagnosis and treatment. Some of your vet's recommendations might include daily brushing, a course of antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medications, a change in diet, and more.



Want to schedule a dental cleaning with your veterinarian?
Scan the QR code to schedule an appointment with the PetDesk App.

