

Frequently Asked Questions about Dental Care for Cats

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DR. LOGAN OF THE AMERICAN VETERINARY DENTAL ASSOCIATION ANSWERS YOUR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will my cat suffer if I do not take care of her teeth and gums?

Gum disease can cause cats pain and serious dental problems later in life, as well as possibly lead to more serious illnesses, such as heart and kidney disease. But gum disease can be prevented. By beginning early in your cat's life to care for her teeth, you can spare your cat the discomfort caused by gum disease.

Can cats get cavities?

Pets, like their human owners, can get cavities. However, cavities are relatively rare in cats because cats' diets generally are not high in decay-causing sugars. Veterinary dental experts have noticed a mild rise in the incidence of cavities among pets fed sugary treats. To avoid cavities in your cat's mouth, feed only cat food and treats designed for cats.

Is bad breath in cats just natural?

No. While it is true that bad breath can indicate a more serious illness, bad breath in pets is most often caused by bacteria. Plaque and tartar, if not removed from the teeth, increase the chance of gum infection.

How can a professional dental cleaning by a veterinarian help my cat?

A [professional dental cleaning](#) will remove plaque, stain, and tartar encrusted above and below the gumline, restoring your cat's teeth to a clean and polished condition, and removing the bacteria that can cause gum disease.

What is causing a big, swollen bump on my cat's gum?

Isolated swelling on the gum above one tooth could indicate a couple of problems, such as a [feline dental resorption lesion](#) or an abscessed tooth. In both cases, immediate veterinary care is indicated. Left untreated, cervical line lesions (also known as feline dental resorptions) are especially painful and can lead to tooth loss in cats.

My cat broke off a tooth. Can the tooth be replaced?

Veterinary dentists can install crowns and replacement teeth for pets with damaged or missing teeth. Your family veterinarian can provide a referral to a veterinary dental specialist, when it is appropriate.

Does it matter whether my cat eats hard or soft food?

Studies show that hard kibbles are slightly better at keeping plaque from accumulating on the teeth. Currently, there are several pet foods that have been proven to help reduce plaque and tartar. If you think your pet needs a special food, consult your family veterinarian.

When is my cat too old for toothbrushing?

Your cat is never too old for [toothbrushing](#). In fact, the older your cat gets, the more important it is to keep plaque and tartar from accumulating. Studies show that bacteria from dental diseases can move systematically into the vital organs. Keeping your cat's mouth healthy is an important step in your cat's overall good health.