

Dental Care FAQs

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This article was adapted from information developed for veterinarians and their clients by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Veterinary Dental Association and Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc. as part of Pet Dental Health Month. We thank them for making this information available to Drs. Foster & Smith, Inc. and ultimately to you.

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

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

Gum disease can cause dogs 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 dog's life to care for her teeth, you can spare your dog the discomfort caused by gum disease.

Can dogs get cavities?

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

What causes a dog to break its teeth?

The most common cause of tooth breakage among dogs is chewing on objects that are too hard. To help prevent tooth breakage, watch how your dog chews on any new toy. If it is aggressively biting down, trying to crack the toy, you probably should not let the dog chew on that toy. For especially aggressive chewers, look for toys they cannot get their mouths around. Rawhide or other chews that soften as the dog chews are another option.



Is bad breath in dogs 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 dog?

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

My dog shows a ridge-like wear on its canine teeth. What causes this?

Wear patterns show up from repeated chewing. The ridge-like wear you describe could be attributed to chewing on a chain-link fence. Dogs that are left alone in backyards may chew on fences because they are bored, scared, frustrated, or for other reasons. The best solution is to keep the dog and the fence away from each other.

Do dogs wear braces?

For some dogs, braces are necessary to straighten the teeth enough so the dog's mouth opens and closes correctly. Orthodontic procedures can vary from limited work on a few teeth to a full set of braces. However, most dogs are born with sufficiently straight teeth to allow them to chew without problems.

Does it matter whether my dog 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 dog needs a special food, consult your family veterinarian.

When is my dog too old for toothbrushing?

Your dog is never too old for [toothbrushing](#). In fact, the older your dog 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 dog's mouth healthy is an important step in your dog's overall good health.