Train Loyal Companions, LLC

"Unleash Your Potential"

Dog Dental Care

Written by Leslie Hudson, CPDT

Fast Facts

- All dogs regardless of size and breed will have 42 permanent teeth.
- Periodontal disease is the most common health problem in dogs and cats.
- Most dogs and cats develop periodontal disease by 3 years of age.
- Depending on your dog's overall health, bacteria from periodontal disease can spread to affect other organs.
- Periodontal disease can lead to tooth loss.
- A healthy pet mouth should have "bubble gum" pink gums, white teeth, and no bad breath.
- Regular brushing and providing proper dental chews can reduce tartar and plaque buildup.
- Providing routine dental care for your pet can be easy and can benefit your pet's overall health.
- If your dog won't tolerate toothbrushing, your veterinarian can recommend plaque-preventive products for your dog.



Signs of Dental Problems

- Bad breath
- Sensitivity around the mouth
- Loss of appetite and/or weight
- Yellow or brown deposits on teeth
- Bleeding, inflamed, gums
- Loose or missing teeth
- Pawing at the mouth or face
- Difficulty chewing

What is Periodontal Disease

Most bad breath in pets may be a sign of periodontal disease that could lead to other health problems. Periodontal disease starts when plaque, a bacterial film, coats the tooth. Plaque hardens or calcifies into tartar, a thick yellow or brown layer on the teeth. Tartar can irritate the gums, creating a setting where bacteria thrive. As the disease progresses, the gums become tender, red, and swollen and the bacteria continue to multiply. Eventually, the inflamed gums pull away from the teeth, creating pockets that trap more bacteria and food particles. The gums bleed, the roots of the teeth may become exposed, teeth may become loose, and your pet may feel pain when eating. If the bacteria enter the bloodstream, they can create problems for organs such as the heart, liver, and kidneys.

Periodontal Disease Prevention

- Take your pet to annual veterinary checkups.
- Routine ultrasonic teeth cleaning is the best strategy for lifelong dog dental health.
- Brush your dog's teeth or use plaque-reducing products a few times a week, if not daily.
- Feed dry food which helps stimulate the gums and teeth, reducing tartar and plaque buildup.

Techniques to Brush Your Dog's Teeth

- Toothbrushing should be a bonding experience. Start by letting your dog get used to the toothbrush and toothpaste. Also, get your dog used to you touching inside his or her mouth.
- Brush your dog's teeth along the gum line. Brush up to at least thirty seconds of brushing for each side of the mouth every other day.

Proper Dog Dental Chews

Chewing: normal, natural, and necessary. Provide your dog and puppy with proper chews, toys, and dental care. Providing proper chews and toys makes your dog's dental hygiene more hands-off. Plus, toys and chews can keep your dog's brain stimulated and occupied. Be sure to give your dog the proper size chews and toys and only items safe for pets. Do not allow your dog to chew on discarded clothing or trash. Allowing this will teach the dog it's okay to chew on such things. Swallowed strings and clothes are a major choking hazard. In addition to providing proper chews for teeth and gum stimulation, brush your dog's teeth regularly and consult your vet about dental care.



Animal antlers are great dog chews. They are natural and provide the dog with calcium as they chew on them. They can get sharp edges and become a choking hazard when they are small. Be sure to get rid of them when they are too small for your dog to guide with its paws or if it has extremely sharp edges.

Horns and other natural animal by-products can be expensive, but most are long-lasting. Many dogs love to chew on hooves, but they can be stinky and tripping hazards for humans if left around the home. Broken pieces of antlers, horns, and hooves can be a choking hazard for your dog. Monitor your dog when introducing new chews or potentially hazardous dog chews.

Himalayan Chews are excellent long-lasting, hard, natural dog chew. These chews are made of very hard cheese! They are low-odor and non-straining. These cheese chews typically last hours for most dogs and they are healthy and nutritious!

Most bully sticks are all-natural, single-ingredient dog chews. Some bully treats have additives, but most are 100% dried beef pizzles. They are available in many different sizes, thicknesses, and shapes. Unlike rawhides because beef hide can be difficult to fully digest, bully sticks are a fully digestible long-lasting chew most dogs love!



Nylabones and chews alike are excellent for dog chew toys. Many shapes, sizes, styles, flavors, and designs are on the market today. Be sure to read about the different styles and designs made for different dog chewing styles. The softer chews should never be given to extreme chewers.

Puzzle Toys, stuffed KONGs, and similar toys are excellent chew and brain game toys. These toys are dual purpose as they provide your dog with mental and physical challenges. Many puzzle toys, DIY puzzle instructions, hard toys to stuff like KONGs, and other great gadgets are online and at your local pet stores. Many puzzles and brain game toys require a little effort to show the dog how it works but once the dog understands, it can be entertainment for many minutes or more!

Only purchase high-quality compressed or natural rawhide chews. Many cheap rawhide chews are made less safe. Continuously monitor your dog chewing on rawhides, as they can be a significant choking hazard. It is best to only allow 15-30 minutes of supervised rawhide chewing at a time. Always throw away small pieces of chews that could potentially cause choking or intestinal obstruction.



Granulated rawhide, rawhide alternatives, pig ears, etc. are more of a big treat than a proper chew for most dogs. Because these treats are not long-lasting and many have higher calories, they should be given only on special occasions, not as a proper dog chew.