



# Dental care

Dental disease is like a launch pad for infections which travel via the blood to other parts of the body, including the heart, liver and kidneys.

## The basics

- Dogs and cats have a set of temporary teeth which emerge within a few weeks of birth
- These are replaced by a new set of teeth between 4 and 8 months of age. This set is designed to last for life!
- Dental disease is one of the more common problems we see. Much of the dental work we perform is preventable

## What should I look out for?

- **Temporary teeth** - sometimes fail to fall out resulting in misalignment of the permanent teeth. They can also create pockets in which food accumulates. This may lead to gum infection
- **Abnormal jaw development** - can lead to abnormal growth of the teeth
- **Gum disease** - 85% of pets over 3 years of age will show signs of gum disease. Plaque, which is a grey pasty substance made up of bacteria and food debris, builds up on the teeth throughout the day. Minerals in the saliva convert the plaque into scale (tartar). As the scale builds up, the gums are pushed back exposing the roots of the teeth. Eventually the teeth may fall out. This process often leads to infection of the surrounding bone

Correction of these problems in the advanced stages invariably involves anaesthesia and extensive dental surgery.

## How can I tackle these problems?

1. Temporary teeth that have not fallen out by 8 months should be removed
2. Dogs and cats with under or overshot jaws should be monitored for signs of abnormal tooth development. Corrective surgery may be required to prevent further problems later on in life.
3. Gum disease is largely preventable with routine care. As with humans, the crux of good dental hygiene lies in the daily removal of plaque build-up.

### A few tips...

- Start young so that brushing becomes part of your normal daily routine
- Spend a few moments every day touching in and around your pet's mouth. Progress to rubbing the outside surfaces of the teeth with your finger. Next, cover your finger with a damp cloth and rub the teeth. Once he/she is comfortable with this, move onto a finger brush and then to a toothbrush with pet toothpaste (not human toothpaste!)
- Don't rush it. Remember - always quit while you're ahead!
- End on a high by praising your pet when it's all over
- Our Pet Health Advisor would be very happy to demonstrate the correct techniques.

## We recommend:

- Daily brushing with **CET toothbrush** and **toothpaste** (never use human toothpaste)
- The **Hills Oral Care** diet is a complete, balanced diet that uses unique fibre technology to clean the teeth while eating. This is equivalent to brushing once a week
- **CET chews** (for dogs)

## KEY POINTS

- Monitor young pets for abnormal development of teeth and jaw bones
- Brush daily to maintain good oral health
- Start brushing as early as possible