

ALITUDE

VETERINARY HOSPITAL

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BASIC DENTAL HOME CARE FOR DOGS AND CATS

Home care for your pet's teeth can make a tremendous difference in their comfort and health. There are a wide variety of home care options from which to choose, but keep in mind that anything you do to help prevent plaque and tartar accumulation will pay back big dividends. The more you can do at home, the less that will have to be done by a veterinarian. Below we have listed the common forms of home care that have been proven to be of benefit for pets. Frequently the best approach is to combine several methods of control to achieve best results. Remember decreased plaque and tartar is the goal! Look for products that have the **VOHC (veterinary oral health council) Seal of Acceptance**. These products have been tested and proven to reduce plaque and tartar. Visit their website at vohc.org.

BRUSHING: *Brushing your pet's teeth is the single most effective means to curtail dental disease.* This makes sense because the bacterial film known as "*plaque*" is the root of many dental problems. This film is easily displaced by simple mechanical disruption as the teeth are brushed. Daily brushing is required to improve dental health, while brushing every other day will help maintain the dental health in its current state. Almost all cats will eventually accept brushing. The key to success is to be patient and gradual in your approach, brushing mainly the outsides of the "cheek teeth". A pet that resists brushing frequently does so because they have painful areas in their mouth that need to be addressed. Avoid human toothpaste as they usually contain abrasives and detergents that can be irritating if swallowed. Specific veterinary toothbrushes are very soft and angled to assist in brushing the back teeth.

CHLORHEXIDINE ORAL RINSE: This rinse provides antibacterial benefits lasting for several hours. It is safe for pets and rarely causes any problems. The rinse is applied by squirting a small amount inside the cheek on each side of the mouth. The chlorhexidine binds to the oral tissues, tooth surfaces, and existing plaque, and is gradually released into the oral cavity. Some cats may object to the taste of the product.

HEALTHY MOUTH: The only dental water additive to receive the **VOHC Seal of Acceptance** for plaque control in dogs and cats.

CHEW TYPE PRODUCTS: Anything that helps increase chewing can be of benefit. To the surprise of many owners, feeding exclusively dry food is of little benefit.

- Several specific diets have been shown to be of benefit in decreasing dental disease. **Hill's Prescription Diet T/D and Hill's Science Diet Oral Care** are both "mesh-type" diets that scrub the teeth with fibrous mesh as your pet eats. **VOHC Seal of Acceptance**
- **Greenies:** The Greenies have been specially designed to help prevent tartar and plaque buildup on teeth by mechanically scrubbing the teeth. Greenies also help with freshening the breath enzymatically from chlorophyll. Greenies are also easily digestible. Acceptance of these mesh-type foods varies from pet to pet. **VOHC Seal of Acceptance.**
- CET chews: **Rawhide chews** have been shown to be safe and effective in reducing plaque accumulation. CET rawhide chews contain a dual-enzyme system that improves their effectiveness compared to plain rawhide chews. Normal rawhides are also a good source for mechanical scrubbing of the teeth.

(Dogs) We do not recommend cow hooves, pig ears, natural bones or hard Nylabones. They are all harder than teeth and are frequently associated with broken teeth. All chew toys require that you monitor your pet while they are using the product. Never leave a pet unattended while they are enjoying any chew toys.