

# Dental Home Care for Your Cat

*Brushing your pet's teeth daily, or at least 3 times per week, is essential in maintaining proper dental health.*

## Kitty Dental Facts

- Kittens have 26 temporary teeth that emerge at about three to four weeks of age. They have 30 permanent teeth that begin to surface at about four months of age. Signs of a dental problem can include bad breath, yellow-brown crust on the teeth, bleeding from the gums, difficulty eating, abnormal drooling, dropping food from the mouth, swallowing food without chewing, losing teeth, and pain when the mouth is manipulated.
- Feline Oral Resorptive Lesions (FORLs), sometimes called cat cavities, neck lesions or cervical line lesions, are painful lesions that most commonly affect the premolars in a cat's mouth. Cats with FORL may salivate excessively, bleed from the gums, and have difficulty eating. Keep in mind, however, that the majority of cats do not show any outward signs of having these painful lesions. Dental radiographs are essential in determining if the lesions have entered the pulp chamber of the tooth. In that case, tooth extraction would be required.
- Prescription dental diets can also aid in the health of your pet's teeth (ex. Purina Dental Diet). Consult with your veterinarian before switching foods or using dental diets as a treat.
- Broken teeth are common in cats and should not be left untreated. Extraction or root canal therapy are routine treatments for broken teeth.

**Please schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings with your veterinarian.**

*They are vital to your pet's overall health.*

### 1 Select an appropriate time

Find a quiet, convenient time when you and your cat are both relaxed.

### 2 Acquaint your cat with the process

For the first few sessions, don't use a toothbrush. Hold your cat in your lap and gently stroke the outside of his/her cheeks with your finger. After your pet is comfortable with that, try rubbing your finger along the gums. Next, place a dab of toothpaste on your finger and let him/her taste it. We suggest C.E.T. toothpaste, oral hygiene rinse, or Maxi-Guard oral gel which is especially made for pets. Do not use human toothpaste.



### 3 Introduce the toothbrush

Place a small amount of toothpaste, rinse, or gel on the toothbrush. We suggest the Travelers proxibrush, or another small, soft-bristled brush. In a slow back and forth motion, brush one or two teeth and the gum line. This gets your cat accustomed to the feel of the brush. Replace your pet's toothbrush on a regular basis, ideally once a month.



### 4 Begin brushing

Over the next several days, gradually increase the number of teeth brushed. It is important to eventually brush the rear teeth where plaque and tartar have a greater tendency to accumulate. Slowly and gently pull open the cheek with your fingers to reach the back areas. Stop brushing before your cat begins to fuss. If he/she learns to dislike the procedure and figures out that fussing makes you stop more quickly, then brushing is going to get harder rather than easier. Concentrate only on the outside surfaces of the teeth (towards the cheek). Cats accumulate very little tartar on the insides.



### 5 Make brushing a pleasurable experience

Proceed slowly and gently. Stop each session while it is still fun and lavishly praise your cat afterwards with petting and treats. Patience, dedication, and snacks may be necessary! For optimum oral hygiene, brush your cat's teeth every day.

### 6 Consult your veterinarian

For guidance on brushing, or for a customized home-care program best suited to you and your pet, speak with your veterinarian.