

Brushing Your Pet's Teeth



Brushing your pet's teeth is the best way to prevent dental disease. Although pets that begin having their teeth brushed when they are young will usually tolerate this activity better than older pets, pets of all ages can learn to accept having their teeth brushed.

The best time to brush your pet's teeth is when you are both relaxed. If your pet resists the brushing, growls, bites, scratches or shows any other signs of aggression during tooth brushing, stop immediately and consult your Banfield medical team for advice. Tooth brushing should be introduced slowly, and may even take several days to weeks for your pet to adjust.

Follow these steps in order, moving on as your pet accepts each step.

1. Gently position your pet in a corner (of a sofa, chair or room) so that he/she will be secure, comfortable and more easily handled. Carefully lift the lips to expose his/her teeth.



2. Rub your finger over your pet's teeth and gums for about 15 seconds to get your pet used to having something in his/her mouth. It might be necessary to do this a couple of times before the next step.



3. Put a small amount of pet toothpaste on your finger, and allow the pet to taste it. Do not use human toothpaste.
4. Place a small amount of pet toothpaste on a finger, brush or piece of gauze over the index finger. Gently rub the brush on the outside of your pet's teeth and gums. Repeat this process for the next few brushing sessions. As soon as your pet begins to accept this, transition to a regular dog or cat toothbrush.



5. Apply a small amount of pet toothpaste to a bristle toothbrush specially designed for pets. Place the brush bristles at a 45-degree angle to the gum line. Move the brush gently in circular patterns over your pet's teeth. Start by brushing a few teeth. As brushing sessions continue, slowly include more teeth. Build up to about 30 seconds on each side of the dog's mouth. Remember to brush both upper and lower teeth.



For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

Tips for success

- When brushing with a toothbrush, keep the mouth closed and slip the brush in between the cheek and teeth.
- Your pet may try to move backward when you open their mouth, be prepared.
- Brush your pet's teeth daily.
- Brush on the outside of the teeth only. Do not worry about the inside of the teeth.
- Praise your pet frequently during the procedure.
- If your pet tolerates only brief brushing, don't be discouraged. Some brushing is better than none at all.

Tips for cats

- Use these same steps when brushing your cat's teeth.
- Take each step slowly and allow your cat to become familiar with what you are doing.
- When using a toothbrush, use the smallest size available.
- If your cat refuses to accept the toothbrush or finger brush, try using a piece of gauze, wrapped around your finger, with pet toothpaste on it.

Home dental care

Did you know that certain diets, toys and treats may help maintain the health of your pet's teeth? Although not as effective as brushing, these items are a great complement to brushing and can be used for pets that will not tolerate brushing.

These products may have a mild abrasive surface to help scrape plaque off of your pet's teeth. Other products have enzymes to break down tartar or reduce bacteria.

Ask your Banfield medical team about which products are most appropriate for your pet!

