



Brushing your dog's teeth

Good dental care means no more 'doggy breath', but more importantly can really make a long term difference to mouth problems as well as the overall health of your pet.

Five reasons to brush your dog's teeth:

1. Dental disease is a painful debilitating condition that causes suffering to tens of thousands of pets each year.
2. Dental disease is called the **silent killer** because it is not obvious when a pet is suffering with this problem. In some cases, if left unchecked this can cause death.
3. Dental disease is the only condition we can guarantee your pet will get if you don't take appropriate action.
4. Daily brushing is the best way to prevent this.
5. Dental problems can cost hundreds of pounds to correct each year – it is much cheaper to avoid this and take a preventative approach.

Positioning to allow easy brushing of your pet's teeth - first choose a time when you don't have to rush tooth brushing - otherwise you and your dog will become stressed and they will be less co-operative. Ask your dog to sit, hold the muzzle shut with your thumb over the top of the nose with fingers underneath. Keeping the mouth shut, gently lift the lip at the side to show the teeth.

Preparing the brush for battle - apply a small amount of Virbac Enzymatic pet toothpaste to the brush. It isn't advisable to use human toothpaste for a number of reasons:

- Dogs don't tend to like frothy toothpaste
- Unless you have your dog very well trained to rinse and spit, the toothpaste will be swallowed, which over time might cause tummy problems
- The minty flavour of human toothpastes can taste like a vindaloo curry to some dogs! They much prefer a malt or poultry flavour of their own toothpaste

The next trick is to make sure that the paste is pushed into the bristles of the toothbrush; otherwise you will find that the paste is eaten even before you have started brushing.

Doing the deed - rotate the brush so that it slots into the back of the mouth between the gums and the teeth. Start gently brushing at the back of the mouth moving forward to the front. Then repeat on the other side. You don't usually have to do the inner aspect of the cheek teeth as the tongue does a good job of keeping this area clean. Finish with the very small teeth at the front. These are a bit ticklish and you may struggle to do the rest if you start with these.

Hints to make it easier - in puppies examine their mouth and clean their teeth as part of your routine health check. Starting early is definitely easier; you can make it a fun thing to do with them.

With older dogs if it's your first attempt at cleaning your dog's teeth, remember it's going to be a bit of a surprise for him or her. Consider working up in stages to the full brushing experience rather than trying to do it all at once.

Start by just getting the dog settled and relaxed at having his or her gums and teeth examined. Then progress onto using your finger to rub on the teeth. If your dog is still anxious move onto a finger brush rather than going straight to a toothbrush. Finally try the toothbrush!

Toothpaste can be introduced at any stage once you feel they are confident about the whole process. We would advise to delay and re-try another time if your dog becomes anxious.

Turn the whole process into a fun routine; that way both you and your dog will get to know what should happen next. Once done give plenty of praise and perhaps even a tooth friendly treat!

Ensure you have the correct products - at Hillside Vets we stock starter tooth brushing kits for cats and dogs. We also supply new toothbrushes, tooth pastes and enzymatic chews. Please ask at reception or book an appointment for a nurse clinic appointment, where we will give you tooth brushing top tips.

We recommend seeing your pet back three months after a dental procedure for a free check up with one of our nurses.

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