

# Pitts Veterinary Hospital

2225 Hwy 2    Lincoln, NE 68502    402-423-4120    Fax 402-423-5950    [www.pittsveterinaryhospital.com](http://www.pittsveterinaryhospital.com)

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## **Preventive Dental Home Care**

Good oral care is an important part of your pet's overall health. Just like you, your pet needs to receive regular dental care at home. It is best to begin dental home care when your pet is young; however, it is never too late to start! If your animal has any plaque/tartar buildup, it is best to start with a dental cleaning at our office. This will allow you to start your home care routine with teeth that are clean and will make your efforts easier and more effective.

1. **Brushing:** Daily brushing is one of the most commonly recommended steps to good oral health. This will not only reduce tartar, but will also decrease plaque (pre-tartar buildup) and help prevent gingivitis. Please follow the steps on the reverse side of this sheet to help make the brushing experience an enjoyable one for you and your pet.
2. **Oral Care Spray:** This homeopathic treatment can be sprayed into the mouth of your pet twice daily to prevent tartar buildup. It will soften tartar if it is already present, but manual removal is sometimes still needed. This spray is easy to use and is great for freshening your pet's breath as well. For best results, your pet can not have food or water for 30 minutes after the product is applied.
3. **Science Diet T/D:** This diet is specially designed to mechanically remove tartar from your pet's teeth. The kibbles do not crumble when bitten into, resulting in the tartar being scraped from the teeth. It may be used as a complete diet or as tooth friendly treats. They come in original and small bites for dogs, as well as a cat formulation. Samples are available for your pet to try! There are other diets commercially available (Iams/Eukanuba) that have added enzymes to the kibble to aid in maintaining good oral health in your pet.
4. **Treats/Rawhides:** Treats such as Greenies, CET treats, Enzadent oral chews and even rawhides are good for keeping teeth clean. Monitoring your pet to see how they eat these treats is recommended. They have to be chewed on to work but if large pieces are swallowed whole, gastric obstruction may result. These also may add extra calories or result in an upset stomach. Hard treats such as nylon bones or actual bone treats can be too hard and result in fractures of the teeth.
5. **Oral Rinses:** Cats and Dogs with gingivitis will benefit from antiseptic mouth washes. Chlorhexidine rinses are effective for reducing plaque and freshening breath. They provide anti-plaque and anti-calculus properties and aid in the prevention of tooth and gum disease. Rinses can be used by themselves, but are most effective when paired with other preventive measures.

Dental disease can lead not only to bad breath, but also tooth loss, pain, drooling, loss of appetite and weight loss. Most pets periodically need a professional cleaning under anesthesia. This allows us to thoroughly examine all oral structures (teeth, gums, throat and tongue) and includes cleaning, polishing, and evaluating teeth that may need to be removed. Consult with your veterinary professional or visit the American Veterinary Dental College at [www.avdc.org](http://www.avdc.org) for further information about how you can keep your pet's teeth healthy.

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## Brushing Your Pets Teeth

The daily brushing process should be pleasant for both you and your pet. Many pets enjoy the added attention while many owners look forward to the close quality time spent with their companion animal.

The supplies you need are a finger brush and/or toothbrush and pet toothpaste. Most animals accept brushing very well if they are introduced to the procedure in a calm and patient way. We recommend following these steps:

**Step 1:** Gently pet and scratch the muzzle, slowly lifting the lip for about 10 seconds. Reward with a treat at the end of the session.

**Step 2:** Repeat as above except gently run your finger over your pet's teeth for 10-15 seconds. To begin, only run your finger over the outside upper teeth, not including the incisors (the front teeth). Reward and praise again.

**Step 3:** Repeat Step 2, adding 15 seconds time to running your finger over your pet's teeth. Always reward with praise and treat.

**Step 4:** If all is going well, insert the finger brush (or toothbrush) over your finger, using water only, and gently insert into your pet's mouth and rub the teeth for about 30 seconds.

**Step 5:** Repeat as above and increase the time the finger brush or toothbrush is in your pet's mouth by 30 seconds. At this time, gently expose the incisors (front teeth) and brush for 10 seconds.

**Step 6:** Repeat as above, adding a small amount of pet toothpaste to the finger brush or toothbrush and gently pass it over the teeth. Increase the amount of time spent on the incisors by 10 seconds.

**Step 7:** You know your pet best of all. If you feel that he/she is accepting the brushing well, gradually increase the brushing time until you are able to spend at least one minute on each side.

At any time that your pet is resistant, stop and wait until the next day. If your pet is still resistant, contact our office and our technicians will be happy to assist you.

### **Helpful Hints**

- Be patient. Take time with the process or else the pet may become resistant.
- Praise your pet. It is a new experience and praising your pet will make him or her more receptive.
- Reward your pet with treats at the end of each session. Remember, always make it fun!
- Stop immediately if your pet shows any signs of aggression. Call the hospital for advice.
- Human toothpaste is for humans and NOT for pets. It is common for human toothpaste to cause stomach problems and even vomiting.
- Brushing the teeth at home will decrease the frequency of professional dental care.
- Remember, always make it FUN!

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