



# Dental hygiene for your dog

It's important to look after your dog's teeth.  
Learn how in this easy-to-follow guide.



# How to care for your dog's teeth

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It is important to look after your dog's teeth. Although they are not prone to cavities like humans, they can still develop problems like tartar, plaque buildup and gingivitis. Severe dental disease can result in teeth requiring extraction or permanent damage to the underlying bone.

There are lots of methods to help keep your dog's teeth clean. These include; specially formulated dry foods, additives for their water and chew toys if used frequently. However, tooth brushing is often the best way to keep their teeth clean.

## How and when to start brushing your dog's teeth

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It is a good idea to get your dog used to having their teeth brushed when your dog is a puppy. If you didn't get your dog as a puppy, tooth brushing can start as soon as your new dog is settled in your home and you feel comfortable doing so.

Purchase some enzymatic dog toothpaste and a brush from your vet. Enzymatic toothpaste helps break down plaque and reduces bad breath. **Never use human toothpaste as this is toxic to dogs.**



**Pop a little bit of the toothpaste on to your dog's food. This will help them become accustomed to the taste.**



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After a few days, put a little bit on your finger and encourage your dog to lick it off.



3

When you feel confident enough, rub your finger across your dog's teeth and gums without toothpaste to get the dog used to the brushing action. You can then apply some of the toothpaste to the teeth using your finger.

4

Continue to do this until your dog is used to the taste and sensation.



5

You can now try using a toothbrush. There is no need to fully open the mouth to do this; by lifting the upper or lower lip, you will have access to the teeth. Brush all the teeth using a circular motion concentrating on the gum line. Once your dog is used to the sensation of the brush you can add the toothpaste. Ideally, tooth brushing should be repeated every 24–48 hours.



Always make tooth brushing a positive experience for your dog. Reward your dog once brushing has finished. If at any point your dog seems uncomfortable, stop and try again another time.

# Possible signs of dental problems

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There are a few signs that could indicate that your dog has dental problems. These include bad breath, red or swollen gums, discolouration of the teeth, fractured or missing teeth, or a change in your dog's eating habits. Your vet will check your dog's teeth on a regular basis but if your dog shows any of these signs, then seek veterinary advice.

Many vet practices offer free dental clinics with their vet nurses.

A general anaesthetic is required for all dental procedures in a veterinary clinic, including a scale and polish. We would not recommend these treatments without an anaesthetic for the dog's welfare.

## Common dental problems

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**Gingivitis:**  
a thin red line along the gum will indicate inflammation of the gums



**Tartar:**  
a hard calcified deposit that will build up and cause dental disease



**Plaque:**  
this is a sticky, colourless film of sugars and bacteria that builds up on the teeth