

Information from your veterinarian Chew on these home dental care tips for your pets You can help keep your pets' teeth strong and healthy at home--and positively impact their overall health--with these tips for home dental care and pet tooth-brushing.

1. Start brushing their teeth as soon as possible--8 to 12 weeks old is best. If you brush every day your pet will become familiar with the routine when their permanent teeth erupt. Please note: You may need to stop brushing while your pet is losing its baby teeth. Their mouth will be a bit sore and handling may cause more pain. Continue once all the permanent teeth come in.
2. Work with your pet's mouth. Be patient and make it fun. Use love and praise, and try to practice at the same time each day to establish a routine. Choose a quiet time, such as late in the evening, or if your pet is highly motivated by food, try just before dinner so your pet will be rewarded for cooperation.
3. Handle the muzzle and touch your pet's lips and work up to rubbing the teeth and gums with your finger. Put a few drops of water flavored with low-sodium chicken or beef bouillon for dogs and tuna juice for cats in their mouth and they'll begin to look forward to these sessions.
4. Use a bouillon-or tuna-flavored washcloth or a piece of gauze wrapped around the end of your finger to rub the teeth gently.
5. Finally, use a finger brush or a soft veterinary or human toothbrush to brush the teeth using the bouillon water or tuna juice. Hold the brush at a 45-degree angle to the tooth and brush gently back and forth or in a circular pattern from gum to tip. Brushing the tongue side of the teeth is less critical, but still good. Offer rewards and treats when your pet allows you to brush to keep it a good experience.
6. Consider other dental aids. A large selection of veterinary toothpastes, oral rinses, and gels are available to you. Our veterinary team can help you select the one right for you and your pet. These products all enhance your home care program, but daily brushing is best. Avoid human toothpaste because fluoride and detergents can be harmful if swallowed. Hydrogen peroxide can be harsh on the gums and shouldn't be swallowed either. Baking soda has a high sodium content and should be avoided in older pets.
7. Pick kibble and rubber chew toys that will help keep the teeth clean. Avoid natural bones, which are hard enough to fracture teeth. Your veterinarian can recommend a complete and balanced professional diet to use at feeding time and as a treat.

Thank you for letting us help improve your pet's dental health. Following a consistent home care program will safeguard your pet's dental health and result in fewer professional cleanings, less tooth loss, and a happier, healthier pet. Just remember there's no substitute for professional veterinary care. Work with your veterinary team to ensure a long, happy life for your pet. **Courtesy of Dr. Scott Linick, FAVD, Plainfield Animal Hospital, Plainfield, N.J.**

Teaching your puppy eye contact and attention

In the dog world, direct eye contact is threatening. The proper, polite, and nonthreatening way to get a dog is to avoid giving direct eye contact. But we humans can't help ourselves. So it's important to teach your dog that eye contact by a person is not threatening and actually brings good things. Why is "attention" so important to teach your puppy? If you can get and keep your puppy's attention, you can prevent or interrupt unwanted behaviors. This is a powerful thing. Puppies get distracted smelling things and checking them out, and teaching your puppy attention skills can help greatly when you're training your puppy on new commands.

Attention exercises Try this indoors first. First, stand up straight in front of your puppy. Take a treat or even a toy and lead it up to your eyes, letting your puppy follow it and say, "[Your puppy's name], look at me!" When your puppy looks at you, immediately reward him with a treat. (Note: It is not necessary to get your puppy into a sit position, but this drill is a good way to practice the sit.) If your dog jumps on you, simply move back and continue talking to your puppy to keep the exercise going. Repeat and reward when your puppy looks at you. Then try to keep your puppy's attention by happily talking to him (be silly-say whatever you need to keep his attention). As he continues to look at you, keep rewarding him with treats. You need to teach your puppy that looking at you brings good things. If your puppy looks away (and he will), simply call him back. When he turns back and looks at you, reward him immediately. If your puppy is disinterested, first use higher-reward treats and get more verbal and animated. Remember, you are competing with a lot of distractions, so make it fun and interesting for your puppy to look at you instead. If your puppy has completely lost interest, end the exercise and start over later. Keep your attention exercises frequent and short. Begin with 20 to 40 seconds, move up to 30 to 60 seconds, and then one to two minutes. In the beginning, try for three seconds of looking at you (without rewards). Then try for five seconds, then 10 seconds. Keep building on this, eventually working toward keeping your dog's attention for a minute or two. Remember, this takes time and practice.

Teaching attention from the side Have your puppy sit by your side and follow the steps above. Once you've got his attention at a stationary position, you can take a few steps, asking for his attention. Note: This is the beginning of heel work and loose-leash walking. Once your puppy's attention is good inside, begin working on it outside. Since you will be competing with many distractions, start from the beginning. Try for three seconds and build on that.

Eventually you want to work up to minutes of attention outside, too. Remember, this takes lots of practice. Never stop working on attention. This is great exercise to do every day. **Source: The Learning Dog, LLC**

DID YOU KNOW?

- 29% of Americans stop taking their medications before it runs out. - 22% of Americans take less of the medication than is prescribed on the label. - Not taking medications through the full term or taking less than prescribed is the number one reason for bad treatment results. If you are finding it difficult to give your pet medications, talk to your veterinarian for possible solutions. There can be tips that your veterinarian may have to give the medication easier. Also, flavored medications can be made for your pet to make it tasty, making it easier to give the medicine (A). So remember, the best chance of curing the problem is to give the medication as directed. If you need help with that, let us know. We can help. (A) The flavored medicine can be a liquid or an actual treat that has the medicine embedded in it. Some medicines can be put in an ear gel to put on the inside of the ear. This can be especially helpful when medicating cats. With their small mouths and flexibility, medicating cats can sometimes be challenging.

Ask the Doctor:

Q: How do you pill a cat? A: Very carefully ☺. Giving cats medications can be tricky. With their small mouths and flexible bodies, they present a different challenge from that presented with medicating dogs. It helps to trim the nails first. Sharp claws hurt if they contact skin. Putting the cat in a pillow case or swaddling it in towels will contain the body and claws so that you can concentrate on the mouth. There are also pet pillers that are like syringes that hold the pill at the end of the syringe. A plunger at the opposite end can then shoot the pill into the cat's mouth. Some cats take liquid medications better. All you have to do is lift up the upper lip and squirt the medicine into the mouth between the gap found along the side teeth. If all else fails, medication can be compounded into a flavored liquid or soft treat that contains a flavor that the cat likes and can just eat.

Online Pet Pharmacies

Protect Yourself and Your Pet:

Be A.W.A.R.E.

A - Ask Your Veterinarian

W - Watch for Red Flags (eg. Site does not require veterinary prescriptions or pharmacy is not based in the U.S.)

A - Always check for Site Accreditation

R - Report Problems and Suspicious Online Pharmacies (report problems to 1-800-FDA-VETS)

E - Educate Yourself about Online Pharmacies

** Information courtesy of the FDA. For more information visit www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary
Or call 1-240-276-9300

Emergency Preparedness! Know What to Do!

Emergency Pet Kit: The following are suggested items that should be included in your pet emergency kit: - At least 3 days of food, clean water, and any medications your pet(s) may need - Veterinary records (including vaccine information) - Collar, ID's, harness, or leashes -Picture of your pet (with and without you and other family members) - Sanitation Kit: litter, litter box, plastic trash bag, household bleach - First Aid Kit: talk with your veterinarian about the appropriate items to have for your pet(s) needs. Examples would be cotton bandages, antibiotic ointment, flea/ tick prevention, gloves, etc. - Have a carrier or crate ready for safe travel. The carrier should be large enough for your pet to stand up, turn around, and lie down. - Consider micro-chipping you pet! **Know What to Do:** Develop a plan. Make arrangements with a friend or family member that could take your pet and care for them in an emergency situation. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND!** In most cases, you will not be allowed to return to your home for, at the very least, several hours. By then your pet may not be where you left him/her. If you do not have someone who can care for your pet, check with the local Red Cross or animal control. Those that are involved in the emergency management may be able to give you information for a temporary pet shelter/ boarding facility. Also, keep a list of local pet friendly hotels/motels in your emergency kit. If you have any questions or concerns about emergency preparedness for your pet(s), please talk with your veterinarian or local animal control office. They will be more than glad to help you devise a plan of action. ****Information provided by Anne Arundel County Animal Control of Maryland.**

