

Doggy Dental Care: Teeth Cleaning 101

Your dog's dental health is so important for his total well-being... and for guaranteeing him a long and happy life. So don't give him the brush-off! Make tooth cleaning a daily ritual that your dog will look forward to as something the two of you do together. To start, you'll have to get your doggy used to you fumbling around in his mouth. Ease him into it with a total-body pat-down; a chassis inspection that ideally should be performed on him each day. Have him sit while you examine his body to make sure everything is in working order and there aren't any weird objects or critters lodged in unexpected places. Run your hands over his back and sides. Lift each paw and check the pads of his feet and between his toes. Gently lift his ears and peek inside. (If you see something peeking back at you, run away quickly!) When you get to his mouth, approach with caution. Gently pull his lips back for a view of that magnificent gumline. Your dog's teeth should be cushioned snugly by a set of pink gums. A healthy gumline is naturally bumpy... so if your dog's gums appear straight rather than wavy, inflamed and/or cover most of the tooth surface, that's a sign of trouble ahead. When WAS the last time you were in for a checkup? If your dog is getting, well, long in the tooth, it's probably a good idea to take him for a dental workup at the vet's office before you officially start your daily dental hygiene routine at home. Either way, discuss dental hygiene with your vet before beginning a daily toothcare regimen. Okay: it's time to introduce your pal to "tooth brushing a la human." You can purchase a dog toothbrush at your local Petsmart or other pet store. Try the traditional people-style brush with a handle, or if you're sure you won't lose a hand in his mouth, go for the rubber finger cap toothbrush that fits right over the tip of your index finger. Buy special dog toothpaste which comes in delightful flavors that appeal to dogs, like beef and chicken and the ever-popular cat flavor (joke). You can also brush his teeth with a salt water solution. Whatever you do... do NOT brush your dog's teeth with people toothpaste. He can't be taught to spit like a human, and people toothpaste is most definitely harmful if swallowed. Offer your dog a little taste of the special dog toothpaste to get him used to it. Let him take a few licks and nibbles of the toothbrush. When he's finished sampling the goods, nudge the brush into his mouth. Brush in circular motions along and under the gum line, paying extra attention to the upper molars in back. This is where plaque accumulates the most rapidly. Go from back to front, and be patient! This is a new and strange sensation for your dog, and he may even try to play a little tug of war with the toothbrush since you're at the other end of it. Don't expect a miracle the first time you try to brush your dog's teeth. Next time should be a bit easier, and the time after that even moreso. Train your dog to associate tooth-brushing with fun times. Talk to him and make it fun! When he's all finished and showing off those freshly buffed fangs of his, give him a crunchy treat that also does double-duty as a plaque controller. Take him out for his daily walk. Tell him what a good boy he is! In time, he'll grow to accept toothbrushing as just another pleasant ritual in his doggy day. Copyright 2005 Dina Giolitto. All rights reserved.

About the Author

Some insurance carriers even require the use of mail order pharmacies as a way of. There are reports of companies illegally diverting.

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