



Dog Dental Cleaning: What To Expect And How To Prepare



Dog Dental Cleaning: What To Expect And How To Prepare

Published February 10, 2026

SHARE

- [Facebook \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Twitter \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Pinterest \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Download \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?> Email \(opens in new window\)](mailto:example@example.com)
- [Print \(opens in same window\)](#)

Many caring pet parents aren't aware of the importance of regular dog dental cleanings for their canine friends. But paying proper attention to oral health is an important part of maintaining your dog's overall health.

Today, we'll explain why canine dental cleanings are important, what to expect when taking your dog in for a cleaning, and some steps you can take in-between vet visits to help keep your dog's teeth healthy.

The Need For Dog Dental Cleanings



It's understandable if you have a bit of a hard time understanding the need for dog dental cleanings. After all, if your dog's teeth can hold up to chewing sticks and [eating who-knows-what in your backyard\(open in new tab\)](#), why even bother?

Is it worth the time, money, and stress for your dog just to [freshen up their breath](#)? The truth is that stinky breath isn't just something that dog owners have to live with. It can

actually be a sign of oral disease.

One of the most common oral problems that dogs are prone to is gingivitis. Gingivitis is caused by a buildup of plaque, which leads to an inflammation of the gums. The clinical signs can include bad breath and bleeding gums.

If left unchecked, gingivitis can progress to periodontitis, a breakdown of the connective tissues surrounding the tooth, which can also damage the bone. Worse, it can sometimes have detrimental effects on your dog's vital organs.

Certain breeds of dog, including many small breeds, are more likely than others to contract dental diseases due to genetic factors. Senior dogs can also be more susceptible to oral health problems.

These problems can lead to discomfort and appetite loss. But dogs are pretty good at hiding their pain, so it's important to be proactive and make sure your precious pup doesn't have to suffer in silence.

What To Expect From A Dog Dental Cleaning

Table of Contents



Getting your pup's chompers cleaned is a little bit more involved than just scheduling a time to swing by the vet's clinic. But before we get to how the process of a dog dental cleaning typically goes, let's talk about anesthesia.

A Note About Anesthesia

The most important thing that you need to know about dog dental cleanings is that in virtually all cases, your vet will put your pooch under anesthesia during the procedure.

This may come as a surprise to some pet owners who associate anesthesia with more intensive veterinary procedures like surgery. However, there are good reasons why anesthesia is standard practice for canine dental cleanings.

First, anesthetizing your pet ensures their safety and the safety of the veterinary staff.

Dogs instinctively dislike having their mouths forced open and examined. Even the most gentle dogs may bite from fear during a cleaning if they aren't under anesthesia.

Second, anesthetizing your dog serves the simple but important purpose of keeping them still. This will allow the veterinary staff to more thoroughly and easily clean your dog's teeth as well conduct a complete examination of their mouth.

In the end, it all comes down to your pet's comfort level. Even many humans suffer from anxiety about going to the dentist, so it's no surprise that your pup might get stressed when you take them for a cleaning.

Since it's impossible to fully communicate to your dog that what's happening is for their own good and that they need to be still, putting them under is the best way to minimize their anxiety and get the procedure done in a way that's safe for everyone.

Preliminary Checks



If it's been a while since your pet had their annual veterinary checkup, your vet may want you to bring your dog in for a physical before scheduling a dental cleaning.

This preliminary exam may include bloodwork to test the liver and kidney functions, among other organs. This is especially important with older dogs. Dogs without healthy kidney and liver function cannot be put under anesthesia.

If your pet is suffering from any infections, then your vet will probably prescribe a course of antibiotics to eliminate the infection prior to any dental procedures. (Tip: If your dog doesn't like taking pills, [GREENIES™ Pill Pockets](#) for Dogs are a great option!)

If you have any [questions](#) about your pet's dental health, this is a great time to ask them.

Fasting

To prepare for a dental cleaning, most vets will ask that you remove your pet's access to food and water for approximately 12 hours before the cleaning.

This may sound severe, and for the chowhounds out there it may be the toughest part of the whole process, but rest assured the overnight fast won't harm your pup.

The reason for making your dog abstain from food and water before a cleaning is to keep them from vomiting while they're under anesthesia, which can lead to serious

complications.

While food is definitely off-limits, in some cases it may be all right to allow your dog to drink moderate amounts of water. Consult with your veterinarian to be sure.

After The Dog Dental Cleaning

When the cleaning is complete and your pup has come out from under anesthesia, you'll be able to take them home.

It's not unusual for your dog to still be somewhat sleepy from the anesthesia, so don't be concerned if they act sluggish or sleep more than usual. You may also notice that they drool more than you're used to.

If the cleaning appointment was in the morning, you should see your dog start acting more like themselves by that night, or the next day at the latest. If they don't perk up, call your vet.

Your dog's gums may also be slightly sore from the cleaning, so it's possible that your vet may send you home with some pain medication for them.

What You Can Do In-Between Cleanings

Dental cleanings by veterinary professionals are a recommended part of the care your dog needs to stay healthy.

While you can't remove the need for professional cleanings completely, there are steps you can take in-between vet visits to help maintain your pup's [oral health](#).

Give Them Teeth-Cleaning Treats



One of the best ways to make sure your dog's mouth stays healthy is by giving them treats that clean their teeth as they enjoy their snack.

[GREENIES™ dental treats](#) are specifically formulated to promote good doggy dental health. They have a chewy texture that helps clean your dog's teeth of plaque and tartar while also freshening up bad breath.

GREENIES™ treats come in a variety of flavors to whet the appetite of any dog, as well as four different sizes so they're suitable for [any breed](#).

You can start giving your [puppy](#) dental treats at six months old for a great start to a lifetime of good oral health!

Brush Their Teeth



As with humans, regular brushing between dental checkups is an important part of keeping canine teeth clean and healthy.

You can brush your dog's teeth at home using a child-sized regular toothbrush or a finger brush. Dog toothpaste is available in dog-friendly flavors, like poultry and peanut butter.

You should never use toothpastes meant for humans to brush your dog's teeth, though. They contain ingredients that can be toxic to dogs.

In time, many dogs learn to tolerate having their teeth brushed quite well, or even enjoy it. It helps if you start getting them used to it as [young](#) as possible. If your dog is accustomed to regular brushing, your vet may have an easier time examining their mouth.

Don't Rely On Diet Alone

Some dog foods are formulated to reduce plaque buildup on your dog's teeth as they chew, but these foods aren't meant to replace professional dental cleanings.

For one thing, the cleaning effect of the kibble can only happen if your dog actually chews the food. Some dogs, especially younger ones who voraciously devour their dinner, pretty much just swallow without chewing at all.

Kibble also doesn't do much to clean up plaque in the area closest to the gum line, which is the most critical.

This doesn't mean that the type of food your dog eats makes no difference. [Studies\(open in new tab\)](#) have shown that chewed kibble (and the size of the kibble pieces) can have a measurable positive impact on dental health. Just don't rely on your dog's diet alone to keep their teeth healthy.

Good Dental Health With GREENIES™



Dental diseases don't just cause your dog discomfort; they can also lead to serious health

problems if not taken care of. That's why dog dental cleanings are so important.

But you can care for your pet's teeth at home, too. [GREENIES™ dental treats](#) are a simple way to help support your dog's oral health between regular professional cleanings. They freshen breath, clean teeth, and come in flavors your pet will devour.

Check the [GREENIES™ blog](#) to see what we're barking about and get more valuable tips on keeping your pet healthy for a lifetime of love!

References

[American Kennel Club\(open in new tab\)](#)

[PetMD\(open in new tab\)](#)

More Articles Like This



[Why Does My Dog Lick \(Everything\) So Much?](#)

Dogs like to lick: themselves, you, surfaces, objects and other dogs. It's a common behavior across the animal kingdom, but we take particular notice of our dogs because they live with us. Intermittent licking is perfectly normal, but excessive licking has a wide range of potential causes that are worth checking about.

[READ MORE](#)



[Dog Dental Cleaning: What To Expect And How To Prepare](#)

Dog dental cleanings can help your pup feel their best. Learn what to expect from these vet visits and what you can do at home to keep their teeth healthy.

[READ MORE](#)



[2 Steps on How to Fix Bad Dog Breath](#)

Dog parents are no strangers to bad breath. From waking up to smelly puppy kisses to being held captive in a car with your dog's stinky breath, you've had your fair share of not-so-fresh breath encounters. But, there's a simple routine you can follow to help get rid of your dogs bad breath.

[READ MORE](#)



[Why Does My Dog Eat Gross Stuff – and Should I Be Worried?](#)

Sometimes dogs will look at a lawn or a dog park and see a big, tasty buffet: dirt, grass, poop and who knows what else? Dogs eating odd nonfood items is a relatively common behavior; the condition even has a name: pica. But you keep your pooch well-fed with plenty of tasty, nutritional food, so why would they choose t

[READ MORE](#)

Source URL:

<https://www.greenies.com/blogs/what-were-barking-about-greenies/dog-dental-cleaning>