



Cat Oral Care: Three Steps to Care for Your Cats Teeth



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Between meals, treats, toys and the occasional house plant or cardboard box (bad kitty!), your cat's teeth get a lot of action — making cat oral care an important part of your pet's health.

Thankfully, caring for your cat's teeth and breath doesn't have to be a pain. Follow these three steps to help keep your cat's oral health care in tip-top shape.

Why Cat Teeth Need Care

As we mentioned, oral health is a pretty important part of [maintaining](#) your feline friend's overall well-being.

[Research\(open in new tab\)](#) shows that most cats over the age of three have some form of tooth or gum disease. Bacteria and debris that form on the outside of their teeth can harden to form tartar. This in turn can sometimes lead to the gum disease gingivitis.

The pain and inflammation of oral conditions can make it hard for your cat to eat and drink, possibly leading to dehydration and malnutrition. Worse still, if the bacteria from oral diseases get into your cat's bloodstream, it can result in damage to vital organs.



Three Ways To Keep Cat Teeth Healthy

1) Clean Your Cat's Teeth Frequently

Between veterinary visits, you can help keep your cat's teeth clean and breath fresh by brushing their teeth.

Brushing a cat's teeth? Yes, that's right. It is possible, and it's actually recommended to give your pet the best possible chance of avoiding oral diseases. But it's important to make sure you're cleaning your cat's teeth with the right tools.

For starters, don't try to jam a full-size adult human toothbrush into your cat's mouth. Instead, use a baby toothbrush with soft bristles, a sponge toothbrush, or a specialty cat toothbrush that fits on your finger. (You can buy these at many pet stores.)

If nothing else works, you can also try wrapping your finger in gauze. This is also a good technique to use with [kittens](#) to get them used to having their teeth cleaned.

Next, the toothpaste you use is just as important as the type of toothbrush. Never use human toothpaste for cleaning your cat's teeth. It contains too much fluoride. You can't keep your cat from swallowing, and fluoride can be highly toxic to cats if ingested.

Instead, choose a toothpaste specifically formulated for feline use. They usually come in flavors like beef or chicken to make the experience more pleasant for your cat.

You should also never try to use dental floss to clean your cat's teeth. Apart from the fact that the differences in physiology between human and feline teeth make floss pretty ineffective, floss can damage your cat's digestive tract if they swallow it.

If you're not sure what to select from the cat oral care options on the market, ask your vet for recommendations. Some veterinary clinics can sell you a complete feline dental cleaning kit.

If your cat refuses to tolerate brushing or if you just want to do everything you can to keep their teeth clean, you can also use an oral spray rinse. Instead of trying to hold your squirming cat's mouth open long enough to brush, you only need to quickly squirt the liquid into their mouth.

But, let's be real: Unless you've brushed your cat's teeth since they were a kitten, this process isn't always easy (to say the least), and you may not be able to keep your cat's teeth as clean as you'd like.

So in addition to brushing, you may consider giving your cat a daily dental treat that helps reduce tartar and makes dental cleanings painless and convenient.

[GREENIES™ Cat Dental Treats](#) are designed with a crunchy texture that helps clean teeth while cats chew. And with a variety of flavors to choose from, caring for your cat's teeth can really be as simple as giving them delicious dental treats every day. Win, win!



Table of Contents

2) Watch Out for Warning Signs

If your cat's oral health is something you've never given much thought to before, it's possible that reading this article is making you a little panicky or paranoid.

Be assured that isn't our intent; our goal at GREENIES is always only to inform so that your beloved pet enjoys a happier, [healthier](#) life with you.

Obviously, cats can't clearly [communicate](#) with us (much as we might wish they could), and that means they can't tell us when they're in pain or not feeling well.

Cats are also very good at hiding it when they're in pain because their ancestors in the wild had to evade predators who looked for signs of weakness.

So how can you tell if your cat might be suffering from oral health problems? It all comes down to being an attentive pet parent and being proactive about monitoring the condition

of your cat's teeth and mouth.

First, keep an eye on your cat's eating habits. If you notice your cat eating slower, more carefully or not at all, look further for signs of an oral health problem and contact your vet.

Additionally, by checking your cat's mouth, gums, and teeth regularly, you can catch dental problems early. Contact your vet if you notice:

- Especially stinky breath
- Yellowing or discoloration of teeth
- Reddening or whitening of gums (pink is healthy)
- Drooling (if your cat doesn't typically drool)
- Pawing at their face or rubbing their mouth
- Food falling out of their mouth while eating

The tricky thing is that many different feline health conditions can manifest themselves as a loss of appetite. In general, if your cat is refusing to eat for a protracted period or has a sustained drop in appetite, it's always best to get them checked out.

The good news is that dental complaints, even if they result in your vet needing to extract one of your pet's teeth, are relatively minor and can usually be easily corrected.



3) Schedule Semi-Annual Vet Exams

While the steps above are important, when it comes to maintaining your cat's [oral health](#), there is no substitute for professional care.

The unfortunate reality is that most cats, even if you start them very young, will never be thrilled about having their mouths cleaned.

This is why it's important to have your cat's mouth regularly checked out by a vet and full, professional cleanings done when necessary.

During wellness visits, your vet will examine your cat's mouth and teeth for any signs of gingivitis, tartar buildup, loose teeth, or other potential dental issues. They'll let you know if you need to adjust your cat's routine or if they need a professional cleaning or other

treatment.

If your cat needs a cleaning, the process will typically begin with a preliminary exam if it's been a while since your cat's regular checkup. This is so your vet can identify any existing problems and possibly prescribe [antibiotics](#) to clear up any infections.

Your vet will also determine during this checkup if your cat is healthy enough to go under anesthesia. It's standard practice to put cats under during a dental cleaning to minimize their anxiety and help them stay still.

During the cleaning, your vet staff will use both hand and ultrasonic scalers to remove tartar above and below the gum line. After the scaling is done, your cat's teeth are polished, which helps remove the rate of new plaque buildup.

Proactive cat oral care is the best way to support your cat's dental health. Scheduling these vet checkups twice a year is the key to your cat's healthy smile.



Cat Teeth FAQs

Do cats get cavities?

Cats generally don't develop dental cavities in the same way humans do. One reason is that cat diets are low in sugar, which is one of the main causes of cavities in people. Differences in feline oral bacteria and the shape of cat teeth compared to human teeth are also factors.

However, cats can suffer from a condition called [feline tooth resorption\(open in new tab\)](#).

What happens is that your cat's body begins breaking down the tooth from the inside out, and the tooth eventually almost completely disappears, being replaced with bone and leaving only a small bump on the gums.

The process of resorption can create painful lesions. It can also lead to what appear to be cavities in your cat's teeth, although again, these are not the same as the cavities you have to get filled at your dentist.

Vets are unsure exactly what causes tooth resorption, but periodontal disease may contribute to it.

Does Diet Matter?

The food that your cat eats can definitely make a difference in their dental health.

A number of studies have shown that kitties who eat kibble — dry food — have less tartar buildup and are less susceptible to gingivitis compared to cats who eat wet, canned food. Some cat dry food is specifically formulated and marketed for promoting oral health.

However, while oral health is important, there are many other health factors to consider in deciding what [diet](#) is best for your cat as well.

Kidney disease is very common in cats, in part because many cats don't drink enough water. Giving your cat wet food is one way of increasing their water intake.

The bottom line is that you can't choose what food to give your feline friend based solely on how it impacts their oral health. Consult with your vet to figure out what's best for your cat's personalized whole-body health outlook.

[GREENIES™ Cat Dental Treats](#) are a great way to get the benefits of dry kibble if your cat is on a primarily canned food diet.



What If My Cat Bites Me?

It's possible that while you're trying to get your cat used to a good oral care routine, they may get particularly cranky during an attempt at brushing and bite you.

If this happens, don't just shrug it off. The shape of cat teeth and the bacteria they carry means that the deep puncture wounds of a feline bite have a high chance of becoming infected or abscessed.

If you get bitten, immediately flush the wound under running water for at least five minutes. Don't use strong disinfectants or chemicals; instead, clean the wound with a mild salt solution.

After flushing the wound, seek medical attention. If the bite is bad enough, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics.

Healthy Teeth And Happy Kitties

Dental health is a very important but sometimes overlooked part of feline care. Left untreated, oral diseases can have a profound impact on your cat's overall health and quality of life.

To keep your cat's mouth healthy and their life happy, take action with regular brushing and professional exams, and keep a watchful eye for the warning signs of oral health problems.

Then give your feline friend GREENIES treats for a tasty, easy way to manage their oral health. Shop a variety of [GREENIES™ Cat Dental Treat](#) flavors from Catnip, Tuna, Salmon, and more to help keep your cat's teeth clean, healthy, and fresh!

References

[Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine\(open in new tab\)](#)

[Pet MD\(open in new tab\)](#)

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