

Brushing Your Cat's Teeth

Home care is important to your cat's dental health. Follow these tips to keep your pet's teeth in good condition.

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With home care, regular checkups and professional cleaning, your cat can maintain her healthy teeth well into old age. The mainstay of home care is brushing your cat's teeth. Establish rules of good dental hygiene before your kitten loses her baby teeth.

Your kitten can be trained early to tolerate tooth-brushing. Retract the kitten's lips with one hand, and brush in a circular pattern in strokes horizontal to the gum margin. Use brushes designed for cats and toothpaste formulated for cats when she becomes accustomed to the procedure. Some people find using their finger, a gauze sponge or a specialized toothbrush that slips over the index finger easier than a toothbrush.

Kittens have brief attention spans, so experts recommend limiting early cleaning periods to less than a minute to start. During the first session, clean one tooth or massage the gums only. Initially, brush only the outside tooth surface. After the kitten adjusts to the procedure, gradually increase the number of teeth you brush each day. Eventually your kitten may let you open her mouth wide enough to brush the inside tooth surfaces without gagging. If not, the toothpaste and tongue action will do the trick. A daily and thorough brushing of all the teeth is the final goal of your oral training program.

The same procedure can be used to train an adult cat to accept daily brushing. In many cases, however, an adult cat already has some form of dental disease. Professional cleaning at the veterinary hospital and antibiotics or other therapy may be necessary before you attempt home care.

- More Dental Care -