

## Flash Those Pearly Whites

**Make sure your cat receives regular dental care to maintain your pet's good health.**

*By Helen Jablonski*

Brush, one; floss, two; dental care is up to you! Just kidding ... you don't really have to floss your cat's teeth — but brushing Kitty's teeth is no joke! In fact, brushing your cat's teeth and proper oral care are important for maintaining your cat's overall good health.

The health of a cat's mouth plays a strong role in its general health. Plaque and tartar that builds up on teeth can lead to inflamed gums (gingivitis) and periodontal disease. The gums can pull away from the teeth and bleed when the cat eats. This allows bacteria to enter the bloodstream, where it easily can travel to other organs.

"Animals with periodontal disease are at greater risk for systemic disease, such as liver, kidney and heart disease," says Bonnie Shope, a veterinarian and a clinical assistant professor at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, whose practice is limited to dentistry. Dental disease also can be painful for a cat, she says.

**\*\*For the full article, pick up the February 2007 issue of CAT FANCY.\*\***

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