

## Pets Need Dental Health Care

**Just like people, cats need regular dental care and routine check-ups.**

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Just like people, cats and dogs need daily dental care and routine, professional check-ups and cleaning to keep their mouths healthy, according to the California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). Gum or periodontal disease is currently the No. 1 diagnosed health problem in cats more than 3 years old.

“It’s difficult to recognize signs of oral health problems because cats and dogs often stick to their normal routines, including eating, even though they are in pain. However, constant or unusually bad breath, as well as yellowing teeth, should serve as a warning that the animal needs evaluation by a veterinary professional,” said CVMA President Ron Faoro, DVM.

With cats, a condition similar to human cavities can eat away at teeth, causing gum inflammation and eventually tooth loss. While owners might notice cats deliberately chewing on hard objects, pawing their mouths or dropping food while eating — all signs of dental disease — many pets show no symptoms.

“Since they aren’t going to tell us, the only way to know our pets are healthy and pain-free is to have them evaluated by a veterinarian. A licensed professional will know what steps need to be taken to reverse problems and help you establish a preventative home care routine,” said Melissa A. Gates, DVM, of Cordova Veterinary Hospital in Rancho Cordova, Calif.

Many pets, especially those without a daily brushing routine, need to have their teeth cleaned to rid the plaque buildup that causes dental disease. Owners often are surprised by the cost of cat dental care, which can start around \$300 for a routine check-up and cleaning. But a cat’s dental care includes blood work and anesthesia to ensure the animal’s health as well as the veterinary professional’s safety.

“We humans can be awake and stay still as someone with a drill puts their hands in our mouths, but pets will not tolerate that. And if someone is cleaning your pet’s teeth without anesthesia, they aren’t doing a thorough job,” Gates said.

Gates said daily brushing may take a little getting used to for pets, but she pointed out that they allow their owners to brush their coats and use electric clippers on them.

“With patience, proper handling and a little behavior modification, daily teeth brushing should not be a problem and may even be fun for both of you,” Gates said.

To watch videos and learn more about cat dental care, [click here](#).