

Missing Teeth

Find out what a vet recommends for a cat who is missing teeth.

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M.

Q. Can my cat eat if she is missing teeth?

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M., says: Cats without teeth can eat very well; in fact, they do better eating without teeth than with bad ones. Surprisingly some cats choose to eat dry food even without teeth. Cats with bad teeth eat with significant discomfort without the owner even knowing. Bad teeth sometimes fall out on their own, but they can also become abscessed and spread infection to other parts of the body, so proper dental hygiene throughout a cats life is important. Check with your veterinarian about a regular dental cleaning plan. Possible signs of dental disease are a raised, red gum line above a tooth, bad breath, food falling out of a cats mouth when she eats, bleeding from the mouth, drooling, tooth discoloration, decreased appetite, and an inability to eat dry food.

Dental health should be a concern throughout your cats life, and regular dentistry helps to preserve teeth. Dentistry can be safely performed on geriatric cats with preanesthetic testing, proper anesthesia, and monitoring. Most problem cat teeth cannot be salvaged. Teeth that are broken, eroded, contain advanced cervical neck lesions, or have infected roots should be extracted as antibiotics are only a temporary measure against infection. After extraction, a soft diet, antibiotics, and pain relievers allow the gums to heal. Most owners admit that they did not realize how bad the dental problems were in their cat until they were treated and the owners saw the great response from their cat.

[- Back to the Geriatrics area -](#)

[Return to Ask the Vet About Cats](#)

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