



ABOUT THE DISEASE

Dental disease, or **periodontal disease**, is a very common problem in both canine and feline patients, as 85% of patients over 4 years old have it.

Canine and feline patients do not get cavities like humans, instead, they suffer from large tartar/calculi accumulations. These accumulations of bacteria and debris can cause bad breath, but will eventually damage the gum tissues and cause erosion of the periodontal bone.

Unlike plaque, which is thin and transparent, tartar/calculi accumulations are hard and cannot be removed with brushing. If it remains in place for long periods of time, advanced **periodontal disease** can lead to tooth root abscesses or even tooth loss.

Please see the [Tooth Root Abscess](#) document for additional information.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

An annual examination by a veterinarian will help identify **periodontal disease**.

During routine dental cleanings, patients will have their pocket depths checked as well as dental x-rays (radiographs) to identify the extent of **periodontal disease** present.

TREATMENT

A thorough dental cleaning, followed by home dental care, can control **periodontal disease**.

Dental cleanings are performed under anesthesia so that all areas of the teeth can be identified and cleaned thoroughly to help treat and prevent **periodontal disease**.

With more advanced cases, some patients are placed on antibiotics before surgery. As significant **periodontal disease** may be present, it is not uncommon for patients to have single or multiple teeth extracted.

There is a shared concern for geriatric patients undergoing anesthesia for routine dental cleanings. However, geriatric patients are most often in the greatest need of dental care. A physical examination and laboratory tests can help identify other diseases that will put patients at risk for anesthesia. However, a modern anesthetic protocol, with lower-risk anesthetics can make anesthesia possible for almost any pet.

At-home brushing is useful with the application of enzymatic toothpastes that help break down plaque and tartar. Vigorous brushing is often not recommended. Other treats and water additives might be useful, but are less reliable.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Maintain good oral health throughout a patient's young years of life to minimize necessity at an older age.
 - This includes regular veterinary examinations.
- Don't invest too much in at-home dental care treats and products, as they are often unreliable and inconsistent.