



Dental disease and your cat

Tooth and gum problems are common in cats, especially as they get older. A regular home care regime can help keep your cat's mouth healthy and reduce the need for regular dental procedures at the vet's (see preventative care below for details). Unfortunately, some cats suffer from specific types of dental diseases that are not preventable and can occur from a relatively young age.

Resorptive tooth lesions

In this painful condition, which affects up to **60% of cats**, the hard tissues of the tooth are destroyed, exposing the highly sensitive inner cavity. Sometimes we can diagnose this problem during a routine physical exam, but careful probing under general anesthetic and dental x-rays are needed to evaluate all the teeth. Affected teeth must be extracted to make your cat comfortable again.

Unfortunately, this is not a preventable condition, with more teeth often becoming affected over time. Consequently, these cats often require multiple dental treatments during their lives.



*It is easy to imagine how
painful this would be*



[Feline Chronic Gingivostomatitis](#)

Gingivostomatitis




A very painful condition where the gums become extremely inflamed and swollen, often despite normal-looking teeth. The problem is thought to be caused (at least in part) by an overzealous reaction to the bacterial film present on teeth and in the mouth, hence although it may sound radical, the best treatment for these cats is removal of all the teeth. **Here's a link to some more information on the condition.**

Preventative dental care

Ideally, we would all brush our cat's teeth regularly. **If you are keen to try this, here's a link to a detailed explanation on how to start.**

[How to Brush a Cat's Teeth: Steps and Tips | Great Pet Care](#)

However, as cat owners ourselves, we realise that for most of our feline friends, this is simply not realistic, so here are some alternatives:

-  **Dental gels** that contain enzymes to help prevent the buildup, such as Stomodine. This can be applied by rubbing directly on the teeth and gums or getting your cat to lick it off your finger or their own paw.
-  **Supplements** to put in the water, such as Aquadent.
-  **Feeding** at least some dry food, or a special food formulated to help clean your cat's teeth as they chew, such as Royal Canin Dental diet.

Dental Procedure FAQ's

My pet is eating normally, surely, they can't be in pain?

Many of us know from our own experience that dental problems are very painful. However, pets don't generally show signs of mouth pain until it becomes unbearable. This is a defence mechanism inherited from their ancestors - if a dog or cat showed pain or weakness in the wild, it would risk having its dinner stolen by a pack member or becoming someone else's supper.

Do all dental procedures require a general anaesthetic?

Yes. A general anaesthetic is essential to enable us to effectively assess and treat the whole mouth and to protect your pet's airway during the procedure (we can't ask them to say ahh or swallow!)

Dental cleaning performed at home, by groomers or by other laypeople only removes tartar and plaque from the visible surfaces of some of the teeth. It cannot treat the real problem area that lies underneath the gum or access the entire mouth, as is possible under anaesthesia

What does a veterinary dental procedure involve?

We start by removing any tartar from the teeth, then probing and assessing each tooth for gingivitis, gum recession and pockets, mobility, damage or other problems, recording findings on a dental chart as we go.



Next, we take dental x-rays. This is an important step which allows us to evaluate the 70 % of each tooth that is hidden from view beneath the gum. Only then can we put this detailed information together and decide what, if any, teeth need to be removed.

Many of our pets' teeth have multiple roots which makes them especially tricky to remove, so extractions often involve cutting and suturing of the gum, splitting the tooth and drilling away some bone for better access.

Next, we use an ultrasonic scaler to meticulously remove all the plaque, including, most importantly, that which sits under the gum line and is responsible for gingivitis and periodontal disease. **Finally, we polish the teeth to make them shiny and white once again!**