



Hillside Veterinary Hospital
1700 Kings Road, Victoria, BC, V8R 2P1
Phone: 250-598-4477

Dental Health Focus

Hillside Veterinary Hospital Celebrates Dental Health in March & April 2010

During March and April, our **Dental Health Focus Months**, our staff will be placing an extra emphasis on your pet's dental health. We will have educational materials, tips, and handouts available to help you with your pet's dental care.

Book a **free dental evaluation** with our Registered Animal Health Technologists. They will assess your pet's oral health and check for signs of dental disease (periodontal disease). They will help you become proactive in the identification, prevention and treatment of dental disease. You can also learn about the many products available for dental care and dental diets that aid in the prevention of dental disease.

Book your pet's dental procedure in March and we will be pleased to provide a complimentary bag of feline or canine Dental™ diet to every pet that receives a professional dental cleaning.



Do Pets Really Need Dental Care?

Yes! Pets, like people, need regular dental care. Studies have shown that greater than 85% of dogs and cats over 3 years of age have some form of dental and/or gum disease. Imagine not brushing your teeth or having them cleaned for 3 years! Regular professional care from your veterinarian and home care from you are important steps to prevent dental disease.



Causes of Dental Disease (Periodontal disease)

Plaque is a colourless film that contains large amounts of bacteria. If left unchecked, plaque builds up, creating infection, destroying gums and resulting in the loss of the tissues and bone that support the teeth. Preventive oral care can reduce the formation of plaque and help maintain proper oral health throughout your pet's life.

Signs of Dental Disease

All pets are at risk for developing dental problems. Once your pet displays any of the warning signs below serious periodontal disease may be present. Don't wait for these signs. Start a prevention program of dental care today.

- Bad breath
- Yellow-brown crust on teeth
- Bleeding gums
- Going to the food bowl, but not eating
- Change of chewing or eating habits
- Tooth loss
- Abnormal drooling
- Swallowing food whole



Contributing factors of Dental Disease

- How the pet chews food and how much saliva the pet produces
- The shape, size and placement of the teeth (determined by genetics)
- Breeds of small dogs and certain breeds of cats can have a higher occurrence
- Pet's age



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Poor dental health can affect the overall health of your pet with:

- Painful dental infections
- Tooth loss
- A taxed immune system
- Increased risk for heart disease, kidney disease or even diabetes

A Few Pet Dental Facts:

- Puppies develop 28 temporary teeth at about 2-3 weeks of age. Their 42 permanent teeth emerge at about four months of age
- Studies show that by age 3, 80% of dogs exhibit signs of gum disease
- Small dog breeds, such as Toy Poodles, and Shih Tzu, are more likely than large breed dogs to develop periodontal disease.
- Dogs and cats do not "chew" their food! They swallow pieces and leave the rest to the digestive juices.
- Kittens develop 26 temporary teeth at about 2-3 weeks of age. They develop 30 permanent teeth at about 3-4 months.
- Studies show that by age 3, about 70% of cats show signs of gum disease
- "Feline Resorptive Lesions" are the most com-

mon dental disease of domestic cats. Studies have shown that 28% of domestic cats show at least one lesion. The lesions often begin below the gum line and can develop undetected. Often the first sign to the pet owner is a severely inflamed gum around a tooth, other signs are bad breath, and tooth sensitivity. Cat owners should seek veterinary care if their cats exhibit any of these symptoms.

Steps for prevention Regular exams:

- Both puppies and kittens should have a dental examination by a veterinarian at 2, 3, and 4 months of age, followed by annual examinations. Dental exams allow the veterinarian to identify problems early when the pet can benefit from early intervention.
- Routine home care: all dogs and cats can benefit from regular home dental care routine. Home care can include regular brushing and use of approved dental products in place of brushing.
- Introduce a brushing program to pets gradually. Use a soft toothbrush that is designed to

fit your pet's mouth and use toothpaste designed for pets (do not use human toothpaste as it can upset the pet's stomach). Make the initial sessions short and positive.

- Free appointment - may be booked with our Animal Health Technologists, they can help with techniques and product choices.

Pet owners can take a few simple steps to help their pets have healthier teeth. If your pet will allow it, open its mouth and look inside! Look for warning signs of gum disease; bad breath, red and swollen gums, a yellow-brown tartar around the gum line, pain or bleeding when you touch the gums.





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Professional Dental Products available at the Hillside Veterinary Hospital:

- Tooth Brushes - specially designed for dogs and cats, there is also a fingertip brush for small pets
- Enzyme Toothpaste - for dogs and cats in "tasty" flavors (beef, poultry, malt)
- Enzyme "Chews" - for dogs and cats, they can be used when you are unable to brush. They have a mild abrasive action with a dual-enzyme to help remove plaque
- Medi-Chews - for dogs and cats that help reduce plaque and tartar
- Maxigard gel - oral rinse to help control bacteria (odorless & tasteless), nice for cats
- Dental diet (MediCal Royal Canin Dental Formula or Hill's T/D) - a pet food for dogs and cats that can be fed as a maintenance diet. The kibbles are clinically proven to reduce the accumulation of plaque and tartar.

Things to avoid:

- Milk bones - can be high in calories and they are not proven to clean teeth
- Human toothpaste and fluoride - can cause too much foaming and stomach upset
- Salt or baking soda - not very compatible or healthy for older pets
- Stones - don't throw or encourage your pet to chew rocks!
- Tennis Balls - may be very abrasive on teeth and gums

Tips for Home Care

Brushing and specially formulated dental diets are two of the simplest ways to prevent dental disease in your pet. Brushing regularly (daily or every other day) with "pet safe" toothpaste will remove plaque and bacteria and will promote healthy gums thus preventing periodontal disease.



Dental Diets (MediCal Royal Canin Dental or Hill's T/D) are an easy way to offer a healthy balanced diet that is clinically proven to reduce the accumulation of plaque and tartar.

If you would like to know more about home care and dental products ask our veterinarians and staff.



Call today to book your pet's free dental evaluation with our Registered Animal Health Technologists!