

# Develop an Oral Care Regimen at home

The best way to keep your pet's teeth clean is by brushing daily with a pet toothpaste and toothbrush. Pet toothpastes come in flavors that your pet may find enjoyable such as chicken, beef, peanut butter, malt, seafood and vanilla. If your pet enjoys the flavor of the toothpaste then he will probably enjoy the brushing experience.

## A Guide to Brushing Your Pet's Teeth

1. The first thing you should do is find a flavor of toothpaste your pet will like. Place some on your finger, a treat, or a toy, and offer it to your pet. This way your pet will get used to the flavor of the toothpaste and realize it can be a yummy reward.
2. Next, put a little bit of the toothpaste on the toothbrush and let your pet lick it off. This will help him get used to the feeling of the bristles on his tongue, gums and teeth. He will slowly realize that even though the brush may feel different, it is nothing to be scared of.
3. Once your pet is comfortable licking the toothpaste off of the toothbrush without hesitation, try brushing the front teeth in a circular motion.
4. If your pet is comfortable having your fingers and toothbrush around his mouth, try brushing the teeth further to the back in a circular motion. Try to spend at least 30 seconds on each side. Many dogs can be trained to brush the inside of the teeth as well. A toy or chew object can help keep the mouth propped while brushing occurs.

### Important Tips

- Use pet toothpaste, NOT human toothpaste as this can be harmful to your pet when swallowed.
- Use lots of positive reinforcement or brush teeth before a meal to make it an enjoyable experience for you and your pet.
- Put the toothpaste and toothbrush somewhere where you will see it every day — next to their food, next to the leash, or on the coffee table. That way it will become part of your daily routine.
- Go slow — every pet is different and will go through the steps at his own pace. Some will take a few days to get used to this new experience; some will take a few weeks. Stay committed, dedicated and patient.

If brushing your pet's teeth is not possible, or you want to incorporate different products into your home care regimen, then talk to your veterinary care professional about oral gels, barrier sealants, rinses, water additives, dental diets and dental chews. Make sure to discuss any new products with them before trying them on your pet. The [Veterinary Oral Health Council](#) (VOHC) approves products that have been proven to fight plaque and tartar buildup. Look for the VOHC's seal of approval as a guide for products that have met their standards.

