



## Chastain Veterinary Medical Group Pet Health Fact Sheet

### How Do I Brush My Pet's Teeth?

Brushing a pet's teeth is usually an easy and fun affair.

First, select a soft-bristled pet toothbrush or finger toothbrush. You *can* use a soft-bristled human toothbrush but the pet toothbrushes are designed with an angle at the head which makes them much easier to use in animal's mouth.

Next, obtain a tube of pet toothpaste from your veterinarian. Do not use human toothpastes on pets because most of these products contain detergents or fluorides that are not intended to be swallowed.

Then, select a time of day that will become a convenient part of your pet's daily routine. Tooth brushing just before a walk or before a daily treat might encourage your pet to actually look forward to tooth brushing time. Allow a few days or maybe a week for the two of you to get used to the whole process. Keep everything on a fun, positive note. Always follow each tooth brushing session with loads of praise and maybe a walk or special.

Start by offering your pet a sniff, then a taste of the veterinary toothpaste. Next time, let him or her taste the toothpaste as before, then run your finger along the gums of the upper teeth. You may need to start by working with just the incisors – the tiny teeth at the front of the mouth. In time you should be able to work around to touching all the teeth. Then repeat this process using the toothbrush. Concentrate on brushing the teeth near the gum line. If possible, try to angle the toothbrush so that some of the bristles just barely go under the gums. Ideally, you should work from back to front, brushing near the teeth near the gums in small circles. With a cooperative subject, it should take less than 60 seconds to brush a pet's teeth.

Even with the best tooth brushing, most dogs and cats will still need regular professional teeth cleaning, just like we humans. Still, the more you can do at home, the less we'll have to do in the clinic. By brushing your pet's teeth daily and restricting the amount of periodontal disease that develops, you may reduce the frequency, complexity and cost of professional veterinary dental cleanings and provide your pet with a healthier, sweeter smile.

**Chastain Veterinary Medical Group**

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