



Home Dental Care for Your Dog or Cat

**Can I use my fingernail or a dental
scaler that I buy at a pet store to clean
my own pet's teeth?**

Pet Health Information

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Yes you can – but how much good it will really do is another question.

Turns out the most harmful and destructive aspects of pet dental disease are largely invisible to the typical pet owner. The most important problems are those that occur out of sight, below the gum line. Removal of tartar or calculus from the visible part of the tooth (crown) does seem like ought to help, and indeed, it will temporarily improve the pet's cosmetic appearance. However, failure to clean the teeth below the gum line allows infection and inflammation located there to proceed unchecked. This will eventually lead to pain, tooth loss, and perhaps even damage to the heart, liver or kidneys.

Furthermore, scaling teeth or removing tartar without polishing afterwards tends to leave the tooth surface scratched and gouged at the microscopic level. This in turn causes plaque and tartar to build up again even faster than before, because an irregular surface speeds bacterial attachment. In order to really help your pet, plaque and tartar must be removed from both the visible tooth surface and below the gum line. A Professional Dental performed by a licensed veterinarian and his/her support staff is really your best bet.

Chastain Veterinary Medical Group

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