



House Paws Home Veterinary Care's Guide to Brushing Your Pet's Teeth

First, let's begin by giving yourself a high five for deciding to take control of your pet's dental health. Yea you!

It's easiest to introduce dental care when your pet is a puppy or kitten, but pets of any age can learn to enjoy having their teeth brushed. As a pet parent, you will be most successful if you can be patient, choose a time of day that will be consistent, and refrain from pushing your pet past their tolerance point.

Before you begin brushing with toothpaste, you'll want to acclimate your pet to the concept of rubbing their teeth. Find a comfortable place to sit, and have everything that you may need in front of you! We recommend starting with Bouillon or broth for dogs, and tuna juice for cats.

Dip your finger into the chosen liquid and gently lift up the lip to touch your pet's teeth. It's okay if you only get to touch the incisors at first. Continue this daily until you are able to run your finger gently along the entire gumline. This may take days or weeks. Each animal is different, so be patient and go at your pet's pace.

Once you are able to touch all of the teeth, wrap your finger with a gauze square and rub the teeth and gums in a circular fashion. Focus on the gumline, as this is where most of the bacteria like to hide. Give yourself a pat on the back - you are doing great!

When you and your furry friend can handle the gauze with ease, it's time to try using a toothbrush. Find one that is specifically made for pets, or use a very soft bristled human brush. Match the size of the toothbrush to your pet's mouth. If the brush is too large, Fluffy may resist you. When using a toothbrush, it should be held at a 45' angle to the tooth surface to get into the bacteria's hideout. This is really important.

Gradually add toothpaste to the brush. Make sure that you have the kind that is formulated for dogs and cats. Never use human toothpaste or baking soda, as those will upset your pet's stomach and can even be toxic. If Bingo does not like the toothpaste and fights you, skip it and just brush. The mechanical action of brushing is more important than the toothpaste anyways.

Don't forget to PRAISE your pet with each step you take. Make dental care fun! Choose the same time every day, follow with a treat and be excited! You have taken steps to better your pet's life!