



# Does Your Pet Need a Dental Procedure?

## Dental FAQs

### 1. What is periodontal disease?

Periodontal disease is the inflammation or infection of the tissues surrounding the tooth. Accumulation of tartar and calculus on the teeth contributes to gum recession around the base of the tooth. Left untreated, infection can spread into the tooth socket, and ultimately the tooth loosens and falls out.

### 2. How often does my pet need a dental cleaning?

The American Veterinary Dental College recommends that all cats and dogs have an annual dental cleaning starting at 2 years of age or sooner if the pet has identified problems. Some pets with advanced dental disease may need dental cleanings as often as every 6 months.

### 3. Do I need a pre-op appointment?

Pets are required to have a full physical exam (\$95) and medical history review prior to a dental procedure. We also require current bloodwork with panels starting at \$131, and more comprehensive panels starting at \$406. This gives us a rough estimate of your pet's stage of periodontal disease, including whether any teeth may need to be removed. It also ensures your pet is ready to undergo the anesthesia necessary for the procedure.

### 4. What happens in a dental cleaning?

First, we scale the teeth to remove calculus from the tooth's surface and under the gumline, then we polish them. Next, we take full mouth radiographs, to review during the oral exam, where we count, chart and probe the teeth, measuring pockets and other findings such as mobility and root exposure. If teeth are diseased, we will call you with treatment and extraction recommendations. It is vital that you provide a preferred contact number, and that you are available by phone so we may go over these recommendations.

### 5. Why does my pet need dental radiographs?

We perform dental radiographs for every patient to ensure the health of the entire tooth because 2/3 of the tooth is under the gumline. Dental radiographs can reveal things like abscesses, bone loss, impacted teeth and more.

### 6. Why does my pet need to be anesthetized for a dental cleaning?

Periodontal disease, which can go undetected until it starts to cause more damage and problems, is located below the gum line. A proper cleaning below the gum line, and dental radiographs, can only be done when a pet is under anesthesia, which is why a full professional dental cannot be completed without sedation.

### 7. How long does a cleaning take?

If your pet doesn't need extractions, the process takes under an hour. If we need to perform extractions or your pet

has dental disease, it will take longer. There is also a minimum of two hours recovery time after anesthesia. As with all anesthetized procedures, please plan for your pet to be with us all day.

## **8. What are dental extractions and why do you do them?**

Dental extractions are when we remove teeth during a dental cleaning procedure. Reasons for extractions include:

- *Teeth are fractured (after chewing on an antler or rocks, for example).*
- *Baby teeth haven't come out.*
- *Teeth have an abscess or pocket of infection at the root.*
- *Teeth never erupted (these can cause dangerous cysts).*
- *Teeth are dead causing infection or pain.*
- *Teeth are mobile or loose causing infection and discomfort.*
- *The inside part of tooth, called the pulp, is exposed.*

We remove as few teeth as possible, but sometimes dental radiographs show problems under the gum line that need to be addressed.

## **9. What are the risks of dental extractions?**

The most common complication we see with dental extractions is bleeding. Some bleeding is normal after dental extractions, but excessive bleeding may occur in rare cases. If you notice more than blood-tinged/pink drool or spotting, please contact us immediately. Less commonly seen risks include oronasal fistulas leading to often bloody nasal discharge, and swelling of the face/jaw. Rarer risks include nerve damage that can manifest as temporary or, rarely, permanent numbness or altered sensation in the jaw or face, and finally, jaw fractures.

## **10. What will the dental cleaning cost?**

Dental cleanings start at \$475. If extractions are needed, then the cost of each depends on the technical difficulty of the procedure. Pain medications and antibiotics are often required with extractions. Please know that dental procedures can be very unpredictable, and while we aim to give you an accurate estimate at your initial exam, it is only an estimate. Once we have cleaned and radiographed the teeth, we will call you with an exact cost and you will have a chance to approve or decline treatment. It is not uncommon for dental cleanings to reach the \$1000-\$2000 range, or higher if there is significant dental disease.

## **11. What about post dental cleaning care?**

If your pet has teeth extracted, they will need to be on a soft food diet for 2 weeks, this can be canned pate, or as simple as soaking their kibble in warm water. You can resume brushing teeth the day after their dental; simply avoid the extraction sites. You will also need to restrict access to toys, balls, and chews during these two weeks. Specific post-cleaning instructions will be provided for your pet at discharge.

***Good dental hygiene, including brushing your pet's teeth at least every other day, is one of the most important preventative steps you can take to protect your pet's health. If your pet is resistant or regular brushing isn't possible, we can also recommend products, treats and dental specific diets that can help keep your pet's teeth and gums healthier. The Veterinary Oral Health Council recognizes products that meet standards of plaque and tartar control. Products awarded the "VOHC Accepted" seal include dental diets and treats – they are listed at [www.vohc.org](http://www.vohc.org).***