

# Ten reasons why pet dental health is so important



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Dental disease is one of the most common problems diagnosed in our pets and, if left untreated, can cause them significant pain and suffering.

Here are some great reasons why good dental health is vital to the overall health of our dogs and cats.

**1. Dental disease is more common than you think!** Australian vets have discovered that four out of five dogs and cats over three years of age exhibit some level of dental disease.

**2. Dental disease can cause our companion animal's significant pain** and suffering. Dogs and cats are skilled at hiding pain, so you might not realise your pet has a dental problem until it becomes advanced.

**3. Properly cared for teeth can prevent other health problems.** Bacteria from infected sore mouths can enter your animal's bloodstream

via their inflamed gums and lodge in organs such as their heart or kidneys. This process can cause organ damage and make your pet very sick.

**4. Overcrowding** in brachiocephalic (flat-faced breeds) or retained baby (milk) teeth can lead to problems such as gum or lip irritation and predispose to tartar build-up. Adult dogs have 42 teeth, and adult cats have 30 teeth. Ask your vet to check your pet's mouth at your next visit.

**5. When plaque builds up on teeth,** it hardens and becomes tartar. Tartar build-up on teeth leads to gum inflammation and infection, called gingivitis.

**6. When tartar is left on your pet's teeth,** it can cause inflammation and gum infection. The gums may begin to recede from the teeth, leaving the teeth and gums more vulnerable.

**7. Untreated gingivitis can lead to tooth loss** and other serious conditions. Symptoms include gums that are swollen, puffy, receding, sometimes tender or that bleed easily. Treatment involves a professional cleaning and better preventative care.

**8. Better dental health means better breath** – much more desirable for snuggles on the couch or rumbles in the park. Good oral hygiene, regular in-clinic dental checks and at home or in-clinic cleaning can help prevent or reduce plaque build-up and limit the development of more severe forms of dental disease.

**9. Teeth can wear out!** Our pets can be tough on their teeth. Severely worn teeth can also cause pain and suffering. Ask your vet to assess your pet's teeth next time you visit.

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**10. Identifying dental health issues early on can help prevent significant and sometimes costly problems**

in the future. Good dental care now, including brushing or regular cleaning, can help. In other words, working on your dog's dental care now will benefit your wallet and peace of mind in the long run.

Dental health is as vital to our dog's and cat's wellbeing. August is Veterinary Dental month when many veterinary practices offer free dental health checks – check what your local practice is offering and use it as an opportunity to kick start improving your pet's dental health.

*This article is for general information only. We recommend that you speak to your veterinarian regarding specific advice and help for your pet.*

