

# Three Weeks to a Healthy Smile

One of the most important things to consider after a dental prophylaxis, is home dental care. Your pet's mouth may look beautiful and healthy following the prophy, but the mouth will be back to a diseased state in 6 months if the teeth are not brushed regularly. Your home care is at least as important as our professional cleaning.

We all have the best intentions, but not all pets will allow brushing. These animals will require more frequent prophys. An alternative program of home dental care using rinses, chews, or diet may be beneficial to help care for the teeth.

For those of you who have pets that will allow brushing and who are eager to learn, a few points will help ensure that you will be successful in introducing toothbrushing to your pet's regular preventative health care program.

1. **Do it every day.**
2. **Do it at the same time every day.**
3. **Do it in the same place every day.**
4. **Make it FUN.**
5. **Build up to it gradually.**



A three week program will allow your pet to start slowly and gradually get used to the idea of brushing. Again, start slowly. Don't spend more than 30-60 seconds initially on each step.

*Week 1: Pet the muzzle and pull back the lip to feel the gums with your fingers.*

Allow your pet to keep it's mouth closed and slip your finger (eventually the brush) to just behind the eye. Feel and massage all the teeth and gums of both upper and lower teeth. Do this daily and at the same time. Finish with lots of praise and a treat (or something your pet enjoys). If this step is done successfully, the transition from training to toothbrushing will be easy and fun.

*Week 2: Pet the muzzle with the toothbrush and let your pet taste the toothpaste.*

This is the same as week 1 but the toothbrush and paste are added. Do not try and brush the teeth-we are still allowing you pet to get used to the idea.

*Week3: Brush the teeth.*

Start by brushing the top teeth first, concentrating on the gum line. Be gentle and use a back and forth or circular motion. This should not cause any pain or discomfort. Move to the bottom teeth and eventually to the front of the mouth. Repeat on the other side. Your pet may keep its mouth closed during the brushing-it's not necessary to brush the inside of the teeth. If your pet chews the toothbrush or licks the paste, that's OK. They are actually helping to brush their own teeth!

Depending on your pet, each of these steps may take more or less time than one week. A pet that is used to having its mouth handled may need only a few days per step, while a difficult dog (or cat) may need several weeks. A healthy mouth is well worth the time and effort you spend brushing your pet's teeth. But for those of you who find it difficult, we have several alternative products for you to try-just ask!

**HAPPY BRUSHING !!!!**

