

A Tail-Wagging Guide to Canine Dental Care

Brought to you by Westbrook Animal Hospital

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Why Canine Dental Care Is So Important

We all want our furry best friends to be happy and healthy, and that means caring for every part of their bodies, especially their teeth! Proper dental care not only prevents painful tooth and gum issues, but it also keeps doggy breath fresher, supports overall health, and can even add years to your pup's life.

Getting Started with At-Home Brushing

Brushing your dog's teeth may sound tricky, but with patience (and a few tasty treats), it can become a positive bonding time for both you and your pup.

1. Introduce the Toothbrush Gradually

- Let your dog sniff or lick the toothbrush to get comfortable with it.
- Use a **dog-specific toothbrush** (or a finger brush) that's gentle on their gums.

2. Pick the Right Toothpaste

- Only use **pet-friendly toothpaste** (often poultry- or beef-flavored).
- Never use human toothpaste, which contains ingredients (like xylitol) that can be toxic to dogs.

3. Focus on the Outer Surfaces

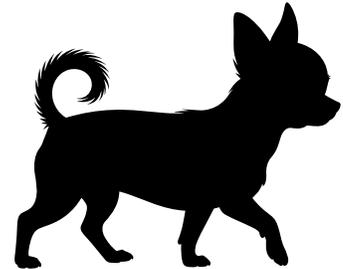
- Gently brush the outside surfaces of the teeth with small, circular motions.
- Praise and reward your dog for letting you handle their mouth.

4. Start Slow and Build Up

- Begin with just a few seconds of brushing each day.
- Gradually work up to brushing for **1-2 minutes, 2-3 times a week** (or even daily, if possible!).

5. Stay Positive

- Offer plenty of treats, praise, and fun breaks.
- Make it a short, stress-free experience for your pup!



No Time to Brush? Other Ways to Keep Those Canines Sparkling

If your schedule doesn't allow for daily brushing, or if your dog isn't a big fan of the toothbrush, try these alternatives to help keep their mouth in tip-top shape:

1. Dental Wipes

- Easy to use and can help remove some plaque buildup.
- Wipe gently along the teeth and gums.

2. Water Additives

- Mix with your dog's drinking water to help prevent plaque and freshen breath.
- Look for **veterinarian-approved** formulas.

3. Dental Rinses or Gels

- Apply directly to the gums to reduce bacteria.
- Make sure the product is safe for pets (look for the Veterinary Oral Health Council [VOHC] seal).

4. Specialized Dental Diets

- Certain kibble formulas are designed to scrape away plaque as your dog chews.
- Ask about diets like **Hill's T/D** or **Purina DH**, which are often recommended for oral health.

Chews & Treats: Tasty Tools for Tartar Control

Who says dental care can't be fun (and delicious)? Incorporate some vet-approved chews and treats into your dog's routine:

1. Greenies Dental Chews

- Loved by many dogs for their flavor and texture.
- Help clean teeth and freshen breath.

2. Virbac C.E.T. Enzymatic Chews

- Enzymes help break down plaque.
- Various sizes to match your dog's needs.

3. OraVet Dental Hygiene Chews

- Special ingredient (Delmopinol) forms a protective barrier on the teeth.
- Helps reduce plaque and tartar buildup.

4. Nylabone Dental Chews

- Long-lasting chews in various shapes and flavors.
- Designed to gently scrape against teeth.



Pro Tip: Always supervise your dog with chew toys to ensure they don't break o large pieces or risk choking!

Safe Chewing Options

•**Rubber Toys (e.g., KONG):** Stuff them with dog-safe goodies. The gentle abrasive action can help clean teeth.

•**Rope Toys:** Play tug-of-war! The fibers can help floss your dog's teeth as they chew.

Just be sure to pick high-quality, durable toys that won't splinter or break easily!

When to See the Vet

In addition to at-home care, schedule **regular dental check-ups** and cleanings at least once a year, more often if your dog has a history of dental issues. During these visits, our team at **Westbrook Animal Hospital** can:

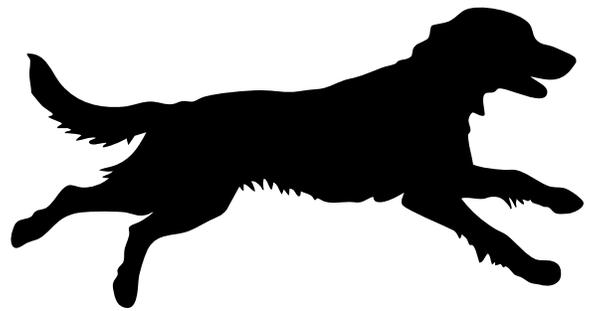
- Perform a thorough oral exam.
- Professionally clean and polish your dog's teeth (often under anesthesia).
- Identify and treat any developing issues—before they become serious!

Call us at **207-797-4747** or email **westbrookah@gmail.com** for more information or to book an appointment.

Spot the Signs of Dental Trouble

Keep an eye out for these warning signs that your dog might need professional dental help:

- Persistent **bad breath**.
- **Red, swollen, or bleeding gums**.
- Excessive drooling or **pawing at the mouth**.
- **Loose, broken, or discolored teeth**.
- Changes in **eating habits** or noticeable pain when chewing.



If you see any of these red flags, give us a call right away!

Fun Fact

Did you know that **dogs have 42 teeth**, 10 more than humans? That's a lot of pearly whites to keep clean!

DIY Fresh-Breath Treat Recipe

(Because a healthy smile should taste good, too!)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup **pumpkin puree** (unsweetened)
- ½ cup **unsweetened applesauce**
- 2 ½ cups **whole wheat flour** (or another dog-safe flour)
- ½ cup **finely chopped mint and parsley** (for extra fresh breath)

Instructions:

- 1.Preheat oven to **350°F**.
- 2.In a bowl, combine pumpkin puree, applesauce, and herbs.
- 3.Gradually mix in flour until you form a dough.
- 4.Roll out the dough on a floured surface and cut into fun shapes.
- 5.Place treats on a baking sheet and bake for **20-25 minutes** until crisp.
6. Cool before serving to your happy pup!



Wrapping It All Up

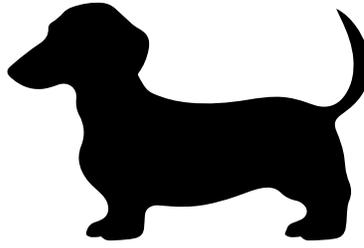
Healthy teeth lead to a healthier, happier dog. With a combination of **regular at-home care**, **vet visits**, and **yummy dental chews**, your furry friend will keep smiling bright for years to come.

For questions or to schedule a dental exam, contact us at:

Westbrook Animal Hospital

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Your pup's dental health is our priority, together let's keep those tails wagging and those teeth gleaming!