Dental care and prevention in pets has received more attention as none of us want our pets to have dental issues, pain, or tooth loss. Because dental disease can lead to kidney and heart infections, dental prevention is recognized as the key to prolonging our pet’s life.

**Preventing Plaque is Important:**

Plaque leads to Tarter. Tarter leads to Gingivitis from irritation. Gingivitis leads to infections and abscess teeth. Infections lead to Tooth Loss!!

Plaque is a slimy bacterial layer that moves up and down with chewing and it uses the nutrition your pet is taking in to grow! If the plaque is not removed within 3-5 days, it will calcify and strongly adhere to the teeth. This mineralized plaque, or better known as tarter, irritates the gum causing gingivitis. Gingivitis leads to periodontal disease, loose teeth, abscesses, and loss of the tooth. Interrupt this process early and you save teeth!

This timeline is important because one tarter is present; most pets have to undergo anesthesia, dental cleaning, and polishing to remove. Our focus needs to be on plaque prevention and removal. We can kill plaque bacteria with oral sprays, water treatments, and brushing and this prevents tarter. Plaque takes 3-5 days to calcify so if we have the time frame, we need to do a good job of killing plaque 2-3 times a week. Water treatments and oral treatments are both helpful. Once the plaque is killed, dry food chewing and brushing can easily remove it. If the plaque is alive it just moves around and sets up again immediately.

**Prevention:**

Routine home care can kill plaque allowing the mechanical action of chewing dry food or treats to remove it before tarter forms.

- Feed a hard kibble food or biscuit daily to help clean their teeth.
- Brush their teeth twice a week. Brush in a circular motion with a Chlorhexidine toothpaste, like C.E.T.® Toothpaste. We recommend the C.E.T.® Toothbrush Kit which includes toothpaste, a dual-ended brush, and a fingerbrush.
- Supplement brushing with oral gels, mouth sprays and water additives. We like the Petzlife™ Oral Care, Nylabone® Advanced Oral Care™ Tarter Remover™, or Biotene® Veterinarian Water Additive that kills plaque daily. Remember our goal is to kill plaque so dental chews, hard food, or treats can remove it with chewing.
- Use treats and toys that benefit teeth care. Dental chews and treats, like C.E.T.® Chews or Greenies®, rawhide chips, such as C.E.T.® HEXtra® Chews, or a Knotted Rope Toy, all will help in your effort to remove plaque as your pet plays.
- Avoid table scraps and high calorie sweet treats that feed plaque bacteria and promote buildup. Sweet treats destroy your pet’s waistline as well as their teeth.
• Check for gum disease, discolored or fractured teeth, and bumps or masses and discuss dental issues with your veterinarian.

Periodontal disease is a continuum of stages beginning with inflammation of the gingival margin (gingivitis) and ultimately resulting in advanced periodontitis and tooth loss. Dogs and cats get gum disease due to the buildup of food particles and plaque bacteria along the gum line. That plaque forms tarter that leads to tooth loss. Managing your pet’s diet to kill and remove plaque will go a long way toward keeping a full set of teeth in your pets’ future!

The materials, information and answers provided through this article are not intended to replace the medical advice or services of a qualified veterinarian or other pet health care professional. Consult your own veterinarian for answers to specific medical questions, including diagnosis, treatment, therapy or medical attention. Not to be used without permission of Revival Animal Health.