

# Pets 1st

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Working with you to keep  
your pet happy and healthy  
with regular dental care

Runnymede Hill  
Veterinary Hospital



Sharing your life with any pet is both a joy and a privilege. Here at Runnymede Hill Veterinary Hospital and Chobham Road Veterinary Centre we believe that good preventative health care underpins the health and happiness of every pet, and dental care is a key element of this.

Ongoing and regular dental care is just as important for our pets as it is for us and luckily much of this can be done by yourself at home. Annual dental check-ups by one of our highly qualified and experienced vets will help keep you on track and enable early intervention if treatment is required. This reduces both cost and any discomfort your pet may be experiencing.



Dental care is just as important for pets as it is for us.

This booklet will provide you with some valuable information to help you with your pet's dental care.

Further advice can be found on our website [www.runnymedevets.co.uk](http://www.runnymedevets.co.uk)  
Did you know that we offer FREE dental appointments and check-ups with a vet?

To book your pet in, please call us on  
01784 436367  
or 01344 620504

## Good dental care is a sound investment

Animals have evolved to hide their pain in order to avoid being targeted by predators - and our domestic cats, dogs and rabbits are no exception. Pets are stoic by nature and will often tolerate discomfort long before outward signs of pain are seen. Often by the time you notice bad breath or a reluctance to eat, the problem can already be serious and require comprehensive surgical treatment and tooth extractions.

Don't wait till its too late! By seeing your pet for regular dental checks we can address most issues before they become serious problems, ultimately saving you money and your pet unnecessary discomfort. Our vets and nurses are experienced and gentle. The vast majority of our patients tolerate their routine dental checks very happily!

What are the behavioral signs of dental pain?

- Reluctance to play
- Reluctance to eat
- Favouring one side of the mouth
- Dropping food from the mouth when eating
- Difficulty in picking up food
- Reluctance to crunch up dry food or chews
- Pawing at the mouth

A decrease in appetite and preference for soft foods can be indicators of oral pain.

In reality, it is often only at the extremes of dental disease that our pets will stop eating and the sad yet misleading fact is that most animals retain a good appetite in the face of severe dental disease and oral pain.

Don't wait till it's too late.



# Dental disease is common and serious

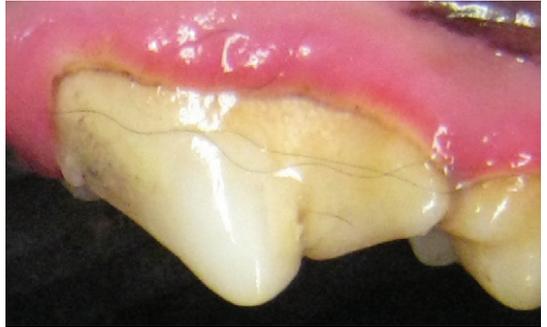
**Sadly dental disease is all too common in pets**, with a significant number of our patients having underlying problems with their teeth and gums. Not only does this cause oral pain, but the associated bacteria may enter the bloodstream causing serious organ damage.

Just as in our own mouths, dental disease begins when bacteria and food particles accumulate and develop into plaque and tartar, then if left to build gum inflammation (gingivitis) develops, causing the gum to separate from your pet's teeth. Further bacterial accumulation continues in the gaps leading to irreversible damage. This is classed as periodontal disease which often requiring tooth extraction to alleviate symptoms and pain.

## Physical Signs of Dental Disease

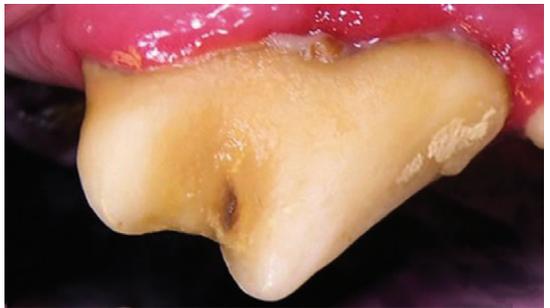
### Redness of the Gums

Inflammation of the gums leads to an increase in blood supply and an influx of white blood cells which are involved in fighting infection. This produces the red colour of the tissues which we associate with gingivitis (inflammation of the gum) and stomatitis (inflammation of the mouth).



### Bleeding of the gums

As inflammation progresses the walls of blood vessels weaken and minimal trauma (even contact with food during a normal meal) leads to bleeding and pain.



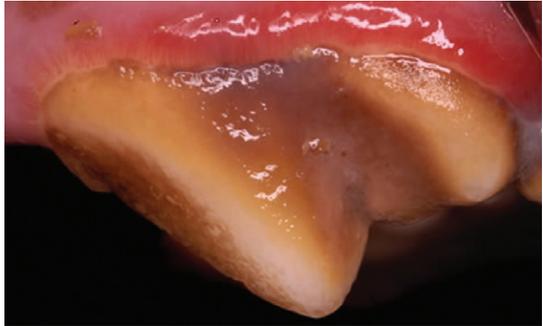
### **Bad Breath (Halitosis)**

The bacteria associated with dental disease produce Volatile Sulphur Compounds (VSCs). These produce the rancid smell that can characterise dental disease. As well as smelling bad VSCs play a role in disease progression and are locally toxic to oral tissues. Bacterial infection results in gingivitis, gum recession and loosening of the tooth within its 'boney' socket.

### **Plaque and Calculus**

Plaque is comprised of a mixture of living and dead bacteria combined with other organic matter. You can see it on your own teeth if you forget to brush them at night - the next morning you will be able to scrape a thin mucus like film from the surface of your teeth.

Minerals from the saliva combine with plaque to form a hard, rocky substance known as calculus (also known tartar). Calculus accumulates fastest in the areas next to the outlets of the salivary glands. The outside of the upper cheek teeth and the inside of the lower incisors are often the areas first (or most severely) affected.



### **Tooth Root Abscess**

One of the most dramatic symptoms of dental disease is when a tooth root abscess develops. These are incredibly painful and often the result of long standing dental disease. Infection can cause marked facial swelling and displace the eye. Careful oral examination and dental radiographs may be needed to identify the diseased tooth.

### **Feline 'Neck' Lesions**

This type of tooth disease is specific to cats and is characterised by enamel destruction and exposure of the pulp cavity which contains the blood supply and nerve of the tooth. It is regarded as one of the most destructive and painful forms of dental disease and requires tooth extraction. Cats with this type of dental disease live in constant pain.

## Get into a regular dental care routine

Brushing your pet's teeth regularly at home is the best thing you can do to minimise plaque and tartar build up. It's important to use dental paste that is formulated for pets, and you may find it easier to use a finger brush or child's toothbrush. We have a number of dental care products available to purchase should you wish - please ask at reception for details.

There's no need to be daunted by the prospect of tackling your pet's teeth - our nurses have lots of tips to help make brushing fun, and as with all things, the earlier you start, the easier it is (both for you and your pet!) Our nursing team can also advise on suitable diets, treats and toys with tooth-cleaning properties, so please do ask for their recommendations.



## Good Dental Homecare Strategy

Plaque forms naturally so we can't stop its formation altogether. The aim of good dental homecare is to reduce plaque formation and hence prevent the development of gum and tooth root infection.

The best home care plans usually involve more than one form of homecare treatment. No single product or technique is 100% effective, and like us, our pets still need regular dental check ups. The aim of physical plaque control is to mechanically remove plaque and therefore prevent calculus formation. This is the reason we brush and floss our own teeth regularly!



**1 Tooth Brushing:** Tooth brushing is considered the “gold standard” if performed regularly and should be carried out once daily.

**2 Diet:** Certain foods help control and remove plaque through the natural chewing action. Interestingly, dry food itself is not any better at controlling plaque formation than tinned or moist food. The exception to this is specially formulated dental dry foods.

We specifically recommend Hills VetEssentials, a complete life stage diet for all cats and dogs. This diet has a specific patented fibre matrix technology which cleans the teeth as your pet eats.

**3 Additional Oral Hygiene Strategies:** As veterinary surgeons, we advise that tooth brushing and an appropriate diet are the first line steps to maintaining a healthy mouth. As pet owners, grounded in reality, we understand that there are situations where, with the best will in the world, it will not be possible to brush teeth or introduce a new diet. In these circumstances there are a variety of second line treatments which can be of benefit in maintaining oral hygiene.

# Dental treatment - what happens?

If your vet recommends dental treatment, you can be assured that your pet is in very safe hands at Runnymede Hill Veterinary Hospital & Chobham Road Veterinary Centre.

This is because we have an experienced team of Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses and our practice has invested heavily in the latest dental facilities and equipment.

General anaesthesia is undertaken as standard for any dental treatment and your pet is normally able to return home at the end of the afternoon. A veterinary nurse will look after your pet before, during and after his/her procedure, which comprises:



- Full oral examination to check the back of the throat, tonsils, soft and hard palate and larynx for any abnormalities
- Ultrasonic tooth scaling
- Tooth polishing to remove any small irregularities
- X-rays (if required) to assess for tooth damage
- Extractions as required
- Fully supported after care package

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