

Dental care and disease prevention

Periodontal (dental) disease is the most common disease to affect cats and dogs.

Your adult pet's teeth are at risk for dental disease. The best prevention is a combination of regular tooth brushing, paired with annual professional cleanings.

1 Tartar

Dental disease begins with a soft, sticky accumulation of oral bacteria called **plaque**.

If plaque isn't removed by daily brushing, it hardens into brown-yellow **tartar** on a tooth's surface. Tartar can't be removed by brushing so, over time, it accumulates above and below your pet's gums.

- ▶ Bacteria from dental tartar can travel through your pet's bloodstream and could cause damage to vital organs.

2 Gingivitis

Untreated tartar causes inflamed, infected gums, or **gingivitis**, which are often swollen, red, and painful.

At this stage, a professional dental cleaning under anesthesia is the only way to restore healthy gums.

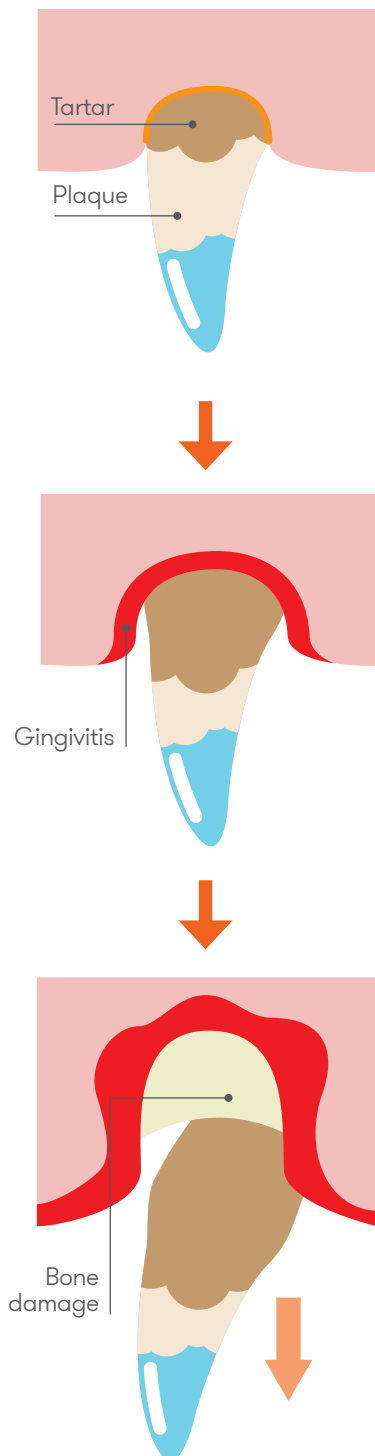
- ▶ Because pets have a very hard time sitting still and keeping their mouths open, we use anesthesia to safely and humanely clean their teeth and gums.

3 Bone loss

The final stage of periodontal disease is caused by progressive gingivitis and involves **damage and loss of the bone and ligaments** that support the teeth.

While early periodontal damage can be treated with professional dental care, advanced periodontal disease is irreversible. It causes significant pain, loosening of teeth, and even tooth loss.

- ▶ Good home dental care, including tooth brushing, can reduce tartar and help slow periodontal disease.



How to help your pet



- Brush your pet's teeth daily to prevent tartar accumulation
 - Check your pet's mouth for tartar, tooth damage, and stinkier-than-usual breath
 - Schedule an annual professional dental cleaning
 - Use dental diets, treats, and chew toys that are approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC)
 - Contact your veterinary team with any questions
- ▶ For more information, see the American Veterinary Dental College at avdc.org or the Veterinary Oral Health Council at vhc.org.

