

# Periodontal Disease



## What is periodontal disease?

Periodontal disease is the most common disease among dogs and cats. Periodontal disease is caused primarily by bacterial plaque that results in inflammation both above and below the gumline. The local infection can spread into the bone and supporting tissues of the teeth causing oral infection, pain and eventual tooth and bone loss.

If left untreated, severe periodontal disease will result in severe pain, tooth loss and chronic infection.

## What are the signs of periodontal disease?

Signs and symptoms of periodontal disease include:

- Bad breath
- Red, swollen or bleeding gums
- Tartar build up on teeth
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Behavior changes
- Oral pain
  - Difficulty in chewing
  - Chewing more on one side of the mouth
  - Dropping food out of mouth when eating
  - Not playing with toys or chew sticks as often
- Nasal discharge

Pets can mask pain and not show signs; therefore oral exams every six months are critical to maintaining your pet's health. If you have any concerns or notice any of these signs, call for an appointment right away.

## How will my doctor know if my pet has periodontal disease?

Your pet needs regular oral exams just like you do. During an oral exam, the doctor examines the teeth for tartar (calculus) and the gums for inflammation (gingivitis). Signs of fractured teeth and the overall health of the oral cavity are also evaluated.

## How will my doctor treat my pet for periodontal disease?

Once a complete oral exam is performed, your Banfield doctor will make recommendations for proper treatment. For pets, professional dental cleanings are performed under general anesthesia only. Therefore, the medical team will perform important diagnostic tests to evaluate the health of your pet before anesthesia and determine if additional care is needed.

Most pets with periodontal disease will need specialized periodontal treatment consisting of ultrasonic dental cleaning, hand scaling above and below the gum line, polishing the teeth and rinsing after the cleaning with an oral care solution.

The doctor may also recommend additional diagnostic tests or additional therapy including some or all of the following:

- Dental radiographs
- Extraction of diseased teeth
- Local anesthetic injections for pain (nerve blocks)
- Oral surgery
- Pre- or post- procedure oral antibiotics and pain medications
- More frequent professional dental cleanings
- Referral to a veterinary dental specialist
- Advanced periodontal treatment

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For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

## Can periodontal disease be prevented?

Yes. Regular veterinary care, including biannual exams and good nutrition, combined with home dental care will help your pet's overall health and decrease the risk of periodontal disease.

1. **Brushing teeth:** One of the best ways to prevent periodontal disease is to brush your pet's teeth daily. Your Banfield medical team can show you how to brush your pet's teeth and recommend toothbrushes, toothpastes and mouth rinses that are made especially for pets.

2. **Dental chews and treats:** As simple as giving a daily treat, enzymatic oral hygiene chews have a natural antiseptic plus an abrasive texture that works with your pet's chewing action to reduce plaque and loosen tartar. Ask your Banfield medical team about chews or other dental treats.

3. **Regular professional dental cleanings:** Most pets benefit from regularly scheduled annual professional dental cleanings, before symptoms of periodontal disease are present. Frequency of cleanings depends on each pet's individual needs, so be sure to bring your pet in for an exam at least once every six months.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about the health of your pet, please contact your Banfield medical team.

