

## Does My Dog Really Have to Visit a Dentist?

Over the years, there have been many advances in dog medicine and care. New areas have opened up for consideration. Dog psychology and behavioral psychology, for example, are burgeoning fields. There is interest in alternative ways to treat your pet. Dogs can see acupuncturists and chiropractors. A further expansion into the field of veterinarian medicine is dog dentistry. With dogs increasing their lifespan, this is a natural outcome. There is also an increased need for dog dentists as a result of the various diets available. The increased use of soft food adds to the need. So, too, does the preference of some people to spoil their dogs with sweets and unsuitable food. The result is a growing awareness of the need for an owner to ensure the proper care of his or her dog's teeth.

### Indicators of Dental Problems

You know you may need a dentist when your dog exhibits the following symptoms.

1. Tartar. There is a significant tartar build-up on the teeth. Like humans, dogs can have tartar increase as they age.
2. Halitosis. Bad breath from a dog is not unexpected. They do, after all, eat some of the most disgusting things at times. If, however, the bad breath is constant and accompanied by other symptoms, it may be time to see a veterinarian dentist.
3. Painful mouth. If your dog cannot eat properly or if she or he has a sore mouth, it may well be time to see a dentist. The dog may have a broken, infected or ill- formed tooth. If the dog will not let you open the mouth to see the problem, arrange for a visit to the vet's. Your vet may be able to clarify what exactly is wrong.
4. Difficulty eating/poor appetite. A dog with a poor appetite is a sick animal. If they are obviously having trouble eating, there could be dental problems.
5. Inflamed gums. If the color of the gums of your dog is not pink, this could be an indication of gum disease. A visit to the vet's is required.

### Common Dental Problems

There are several dental problems your dog may encounter during his or her lifetime. Most are readily avoided through preventive measures. If your dog has dental issues, you will need to take him to a doggy dentist. Below are the most common dental problems.

1. Periodontal disease. This disease currently affects around 80% of all dogs of 3 years and older. Periodontal disease affects the gums and supportive tissue. It is an inflammation and an infection. A causal factor is a tartar build-up. Tartar build-up allows bacteria to breed. If this type of dental disease progresses, your vet will recommend cleaning and polishing the teeth. He or she will combine this with a treatment of antibiotics. If the case is very severe, your vet may have to remove the infected teeth. Periodontal disease has become a serious problem over the last few years. It is particularly prevalent among toy dogs. You can avoid it by taking the appropriate measures. This includes a healthy diet with kibble. It also means brushing the teeth of your dog daily.
2. Endodontic conditions. These are the result of broken, fractured or abscessed teeth. The conditions may require a root canal or extraction. Large dogs are more prone to endodontic conditions of the teeth. This is because they chew on objects such as fences and bones. This causes a wearing down or breakage of their teeth.

Fractures may split the teeth creating pain and opening the way for abscesses. Removal or repair is the only way to help the canine regain a pain-free life.

### Conclusion

In the past decades, people did not consider taking their dog to a dentist/vet. Today, it is a more common practice. This is due in part to the changing nature of our relationship with dogs. It is also the

result of changing diets and the increased lifespan of our canine companions. Part 2 of this article will look at a few other dental problems facing dogs. It will also describe dental hygiene practice for you and your dog.

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