

## How to brush your pet's teeth

Pets need to have their teeth brushed daily just like we do. Brushing their teeth removes plaque (the soft stuff you can scrape off your teeth with your fingernails) before it hardens into tartar (the hard stuff your human dentist scrapes off your teeth with a metal instrument).

When introduced slowly and correctly brushing your pet's teeth **does not** involve chasing them around the house or holding them still. Your pet will enjoy having their teeth brushed once they get used to the new sensation. After all, for most pets brushing their teeth involves their two favorite things: food and attention.

Feeding dental treats and encouraging chewing are good but brushing your pet's teeth is best.

### Step One

-You will need a toothbrush and pet toothpaste. The toothbrush can be a pet toothbrush or a human toothbrush with soft bristles. If you have a small dog or a cat you should purchase a child sized toothbrush so the head isn't too big for their mouth. It is important to use pet toothpaste because it does not contain fluoride and is safe to swallow unlike human toothpaste which contains fluoride and is unsafe to swallow. Pet toothpaste comes in yummy (for your pet) flavors like chicken and beef.

### Step Two

-Start by letting your pet lick the flavored pet toothpaste off of the toothbrush. If your pet is finicky you can start by using meat flavored baby food (you will change to pet toothpaste later on). Do this for at least a week. Pretty soon your pet will start to get excited when they see the toothbrush in anticipation of a tasty treat.

### Step Three

-Once your pet likes seeing the toothbrush and enjoys eating the toothpaste you can progress to actual teeth brushing. Most pets will try to put the toothbrush in their mouth. At this point you can move the toothbrush back and forth and brush a couple of teeth. You do not need to brush the inside of the teeth since your pet's tongue keeps the inside of the teeth relatively plaque free. Focus on brushing the outside of the teeth. Just brush a couple of teeth and then stop. Keep the experience happy and give your pet a lot of praise and tasty toothpaste.

### Step Four

-Gradually work up to brushing the entire mouth. Your pet should be happy and content to sit there and let you brush their teeth. If at any point your pet gets stressed or upset stop brushing their teeth and just let them lick the toothpaste off of the toothbrush. Always end the sessions on a happy note. Continue to brush your pet's teeth daily for healthy teeth and gums.