

Preventive Care for Periodontal Disease (PD) in Dogs



More than 80% of dogs over the age of 2 years have some degree of PD. Preventive care and treatment aims to slow the progression of the disease.

COMMON PREVENTIVE CARE OPTIONS

Outlined below are examples of types of preventive care that caretakers can use between dental cleanings at the veterinary clinic.

BRUSHING

PROS

- The “gold standard”
- Most effective method
- Inexpensive

CONS

- Requires training of the dog to accept it
- Time-consuming — may not be practical with a large number of dogs



PRACTICAL TIP



For best results, combine two or more types of preventive care.



CHEW ITEMS

PROS

- Effective when used consistently, such as daily
- Provides enrichment to the dog

CONS

- Risk of broken teeth
- Risk of gastrointestinal obstruction
- Some products are expensive



DENTAL DIETS

PROS

- The abrasives in the kibble work to clean the teeth
- Size and hardness increase chewing
- Effective when fed as main diet

CONS

- May be too hard or large for toy breeds
- Not nutritionally complete for pregnant or lactating dogs



DID YOU KNOW?

Anesthesia-Free Dentistry (i.e., hand-scaling, scraping tartar off teeth) does **NOT** slow or prevent PD. In fact, it may increase the risk and severity of PD:

- Removes tooth enamel, leaving a rough surface for bacteria to grow and tartar to build up quickly
- Does not allow for thorough oral exam or dental x-rays
- Does not allow for cleaning under the gum line
- Very likely to be **painful** and **stressful** to the dog
- Increases the risk of bites or injuries to the caretaker

Remember:

PREVENTIVE CARE aims to slow the development of PD by removing the plaque and tartar from the teeth **BUT** does not replace the need for regular veterinary exams and professional veterinary dental cleanings under anesthesia.

RINSE or GELS (containing chlorhexidine)

PROS

- Effective when used consistently, such as daily

CONS

- Must apply directly to the gums
- Tastes bad
- Hasn't been shown to be effective when added to water
- May not be safe during pregnancy

Work with your veterinarian to establish a plan for prevention, monitoring, and treatment of PD in your dogs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Veterinary Oral Health Council, www.vohc.org
American Veterinary Dental College, www.avdc.org

This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to provide information about PD in dogs. Identifying and treating problems early is the best way to maintain your dogs' health. For more information, refer to the other topics covered in the series (“Monitoring PD in Dogs” and “Canine PD”).

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

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