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

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

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

PRACTICAL TIP

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

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.

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Veterinary Dental College, www.avdc.org

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov