

DuPage Animal Hospital

Gingivitis and Periodontal Disease

Your pet has been diagnosed with *gingivitis* or *periodontal disease*. Gingivitis and periodontal disease is caused by the accumulation of plaque and calculus on and around the neck of the tooth. Plaque is composed of bacteria that build where the tooth meets the gum. Calculus is mineralized plaque. If this buildup is not removed from the teeth, it causes swelling, redness, tenderness, pain, and bleeding of the soft tissues around the tooth.

Treatment for gingivitis includes a professional teeth cleaning and a plan for prevention. If not treated promptly and properly, this condition will progress to advanced stages of gum disease. **Advanced stages of gum disease may lead to:**

- tooth loss
- pain and discomfort
- gum swelling, recession and tooth abscess
- progression of infection to other organs

Based on our examination, we estimate your pet's periodontal disease to be:



- Stage I - Initial gum disease**-minimal plaque (brown material on teeth), reddened gums.



- Stage II – Early gum disease**—greater plaque and calculus accumulation, inflamed gums. Patients may have bad breath.



- Stage III – Established gum disease and periodontitis**—large accumulation of dental deposits, gum recession, loose teeth, and bone loss. Often involves mandatory tooth extraction(s).



- Stage IV – Advanced gum disease and periodontitis**—large accumulation of dental deposits, gum recession, loose teeth, and bone loss. Often involves mandatory tooth extraction(s).

- Tooth resorption(s)**-These lesions usually occur in cats and are located where the gum meets the tooth. The most common teeth affected are the lower premolars. Patients affected with these lesions have reddened gums, may drool or have difficulty eating. Most cats are painful when the area is touched. Treatment requires X-rays and extractions.

For your pet's optimal oral health, we recommend:

- Tooth brush** with an enzymatic toothpaste 3 times a week to mechanically remove plaque. Brushing in a back and forth motion on the outside (lip) surface is needed. Remember, the more you do at home, the less we will have to do here.

- Begin feeding a dental diet.** Hill's T/D is specifically formulated to reduce the accumulation of plaque and tartar as well as prevent recurrence. Pets love it!

Recommend periodontal therapy:

- Immediately** **Within 1 month** **Within 1-3 months**
- Begin pre-dental antibiotics** _____ **days prior to the procedure.**

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Anesthesia is a concern most pet owners have in considering dental care for their pets. In the majority of patients, the benefits of a dental procedure far outweigh the risks of anesthesia. In fact, untreated periodontal disease will result in far more complications than anesthesia. Whether an animal is 6 months or 16 years, a proper pre-anesthetic work-up will be completed to identify any hidden health problems. This may include; a comprehensive physical exam, blood and urine profiles, and if necessary EKG or X-rays. Patients will receive the safest anesthetic delivered in the safest manner:

- Intravenous fluid support
- Heart rate and oxygenation monitoring

Analgesic (pain relief) Untreated dental disease in our patients is a chronic source of pain. All patients undergoing a dental procedure receive pain medication even before the beginning of the procedure. When a patient has several tooth extractions, post-operative pain medication may also be sent home.

Periodontal therapy/Dental cleaning All too often we neglect our pet's mouth until it is too late to prevent disease and we must perform procedures to salvage the teeth. Just as in people, dental prophylaxis should begin early (as brown stains are seen on the teeth) and then regularly based on your individual pet's susceptibility to plaque and tartar. This procedure involves ultrasonic scaling, fluoride polishing, hand scaling, probing and charting of the mouth, antiseptic flushing, and then selecting a home care program to slow reoccurrence of disease.

Home care and prophylaxis are the preventative maintenance that you can provide to your pet. This can include brushing teeth daily to remove plaque before it becomes mineralized and attached to the tooth. Start this process slowly, letting your pet become accustomed to it before moving ahead. Positive reinforcement and short practice sessions help. Another option is to use oral gels and water additives that adhere to the teeth and protect them from plaque accumulation. There are also many enzyme coated chewable toys that also help break down plaque as animals play with them. Another option is to feed a tartar preventative diet such as Hill's T/D. This can be fed to small dogs and cats exclusively and to larger dogs mixed with their regular food.

Porphyromonas Bacterin Vaccine: Finally, a new vaccine is available in dogs that targets Porphyromonas, the anaerobic bacteria that colonizes in plaque and contributes to the destruction of the tooth and its root. The addition of this vaccine into the yearly vaccine protocol of our patients with the most risk of developing severe dental disease will help slow the spread and severity of dental disease.