

Introduction to Toothbrushing

Toothbrushing is an important step in your pet's dental care but can be challenging if not approached correctly. Your pet can be conditioned, not only to expect their teeth to be brushed, but to actually enjoy it. Please follow the steps below, and always take it slow to give your pet the time they need to be comfortable with this new undertaking.

- 1.** Choose a place in your home that is quiet and provides a surface to place your pet. Small pets tend to be more subdued if up on something, for instance, a washer or dryer or a countertop.
- 2.** Try to keep this task at the same time everyday to condition your pet to expect it.
- 3.** We recommend C.E.T. toothpaste which comes in a variety of flavors designed to be palatable to your pet. Place a small amount on the tip of your finger and let your pet lick it off. Do this once daily for 1-2 weeks as a treat for your pet. Make sure you are praising him when he takes the "treat" off your finger.
- 4.** Once your pet becomes accustomed to this "treat", then start placing the toothpaste on the toothbrush and letting him lick it off. Do this for 1-2 weeks to get him used to the feel and texture of the toothbrush. If your pet objects, then go back to just your finger.
- 5.** Once your pet is used to the toothbrush, then you may start with small strokes beginning with the incisors and gradually moving to the back of the mouth. Use a circular motion starting at the gumline and moving down toward the tip of the tooth.
- 6.** Only the outside surfaces need to be brushed. Brushing, in order to be effective, needs to happen on a regular basis. Daily is ideal, but no less than 3 times a week should be the standard. You may only be able to do a section of the mouth at a time in the beginning. Keep the sessions short and always reward with a real treat at the end of the toothbrushing session.

Good luck and don't give up! Your pet will appreciate it and reward you with a healthy smile and no "doggie" or "kitty" breath. Let us know if we can provide you help with this.

Please note: Although brushing helps considerably to prevent periodontal disease, it is still necessary to have your pet's teeth cleaned and evaluated under anesthesia every 6-12 months by a qualified veterinarian with advanced dentistry experience. This is especially true for smaller patients.

With our thanks to the original author, Annie Mills L.V.T., V.T.S. (Dentistry)