



Montrose Pet Hospital

2444 Honolulu Ave, Montrose, CA, 91020

Phone: (818) 249-2273

Fax: 818-435-8182

Email: info@montrosepethospital.com

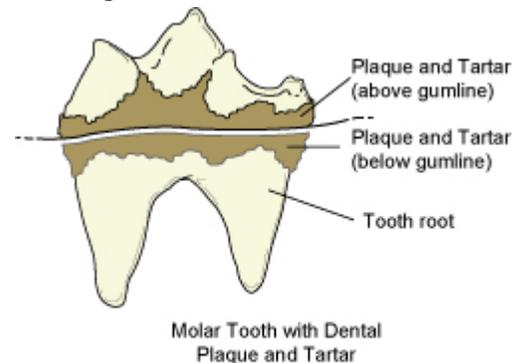
Website: www.montrosepethospital.com

Tartar Prevention in Dogs

How does tartar form, and what does it do?

Plaque is a gummy substance that forms on the teeth within a few hours after a meal. Within twenty-four hours, plaque begins to mineralize by combining with salts that are present in the saliva. As the plaque continues to accumulate and harden, it eventually forms tartar. Tartar can cause dental problems such as periodontal (gum) disease if not controlled.

Tartar is harmful to the teeth and gums in two ways. First, it serves as a place where bacteria can grow and multiply in the mouth. Both the bacteria and the tartar cause inflammation of the gums, or gingivitis, which often results in bleeding. Worsening of the gingivitis leads to periodontal disease, which leads to further inflammation. There is substantial scientific evidence that the bacteria on the tartar can be absorbed into the blood stream and deposited in various organs, including the heart and the kidneys. Second, as tartar builds up along the gum line, it pushes the gums away from the roots of the teeth. As the gums recede, they expose the sensitive, enamel-free part of the tooth causing and pain.



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"If the tartar is not removed, it will cause the periodontal disease to progress, and the teeth will loosen and fall out."

Eventually, if the tartar is not removed, it will cause the periodontal disease to progress, and the teeth will loosen and fall out.

How can I prevent tartar formation on my dog's teeth?

After your dog's teeth have been professionally cleaned and polished by your veterinarian, we recommend beginning home dental care to help reduce plaque and tartar buildup. Some general tactics you can use to help reduce plaque and tartar buildup on your dog's teeth are:

- Feed your dog a veterinary-approved dental diet or a premium diet with scientifically proven tartar-reducing ingredients, such as Hills T/D. These diets have been shown to greatly reduce plaque formation and tartar buildup. These diets contain unique additives that interfere with plaque development, and each kibble is extruded or structured to promote the physical or mechanical removal of tartar when it is chewed. By limiting plaque as it forms, tartar development is greatly diminished.



"Brushing should be done at least twice weekly."

- Brush your pet's teeth. This is one of the most effective ways to remove plaque before it turns into tartar. Use enzymatic toothpaste that is designed for use in dogs and cats. Do not use human toothpaste. Many human toothpastes and other oral hygiene products contain xylitol, a sugar substitute that is safe for use in humans but highly toxic to dogs (for further information, see our handout "Xylitol Toxicity in Dogs"). Even if your human toothpaste does not contain xylitol, it will still contain ingredients that can cause an upset stomach or digestive disturbance if it is swallowed. Brushing should be done at least twice weekly (preferably daily), but we understand that not all dogs will tolerate brushing. Special finger brushes are made that make this task easier for you and your pet.
- Use a daily oral rinse. This type of product helps reduce the bacterial count in the mouth, resulting in improved breath. However, make sure that the product is designed for use in dogs. An increasing number of human oral rinse products now contain xylitol.
- Offer your dog specifically designed chew toys and dental treats, such as CET Hextra Chews and Greenies, that are designed to help reduce or remove mild plaque accumulation.
- Have your veterinarian perform a prophylactic dental cleaning every six to twelve months, or at the first sign of tartar buildup. Regular dental cleaning is as important in dogs as it is in people, and will prevent irreversible damage to the gums and roots.



This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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