



## Blue Cross Animal Hospital

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## Brushing Teeth in Cats

### When should I brush my cat's teeth?

Like us, cats need daily dental care to help decrease plaque and tartar accumulation. Teaching your cat to accept the brushing of his teeth will take some training, but it will be relatively easy once accustomed to the process. Daily brushing is most beneficial and will help to establish a routine. Brushing twice a week is helpful if your schedule cannot accommodate daily brushing.

It is best to teach your cat to accept brushing while he or she is still a kitten. If you have an older cat, the process may take a little longer but it's worth the effort.

### What steps do I need to follow to teach my cat to accept tooth brushing?

- Choose a quiet time and place to begin. Hold your cat securely in your lap or on a table.
- Dip a Q-tip applicator into tuna water that was stored in the refrigerator and drained from a can of tuna fish. The tuna water does not have any beneficial dental effects, but most cats like the taste.
- Human toothpaste should not be used as it is designed to foam, and is not meant to be swallowed.
- Place your cat's head at a 45 degree angle and gently pull back his lips. His mouth can be closed.



- Gently rub the applicator tip to the area where the gum meets the tooth. This is where plaque accumulates. Only the outside surfaces need to be rubbed.
- Do not worry about brushing the tips or insides of the teeth unless your cat is very cooperative. Most periodontal diseases occur on the outer surfaces of the teeth and this is where you should direct your efforts. The cat's abrasive tongue tends to remove plaque from the inner surfaces of the teeth, reducing the need for brushing these surfaces.



- Gradually work up to brushing all of the teeth (this will probably take several days or weeks). Make sure you reach the big teeth at the back of the mouth.



*This client information sheet is based on material written by: Jan Bellows, DVM, Dipl. AVDC, ABVP*

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