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ANIMAL
HEALTH

3 TIPS FOR BETTER DOGGY DENTAL CARE



by Carrie Donahue, DVM

When it comes to your dog's health, it's easy to overlook their oral health. Yet according to the American Veterinary Dental College, most dogs show signs of periodontal disease by the age of three. Since your pup needs their teeth to last a lifetime, it's important to have your vet check his or her teeth and gums at least yearly. In the meantime, here are some easy ways to make sure your dog has healthy gums, fresh breath, and a happy doggie smile.

SO MANY TEETH!

It's not easy to recognize healthy gums in your dog, so look for clues in their teeth. They should look clean and free of plaque without tartar build-up. None of their 42 teeth should be jagged, broken, or wiggly. It helps to take note of how your pup's gums usually look as a benchmark for noticing changes. Watch out for raised

spots, bright red tissue, pale areas, spots, or lumps. If you see a difference, point it out to your vet. Also, consult with your vet regarding a cleaning every one to three years.

GET BRUSHING

Your dog's mouth needs daily attention with a made-for-dog toothbrush and toothpaste. If this is a new concept for you and your pup, start slowly. Move your finger along the tooth and gum line for several days. Once you can see your dog is relaxed, introduce the toothbrush by letting him smell it and rub it on his teeth for just a moment. Give your dog a few days to adjust to each step you introduce. Dog toothpaste is developed to be tasty and safe. Human toothpaste can make your dog sick—never use it with your pet.

DENTAL HEALTH FROM THE INSIDE

The active component in turmeric, called curcumin, may not be the first

thing that comes to mind when you think about your dog's dental health, but maybe it should be. Curcumin has been clinically shown to provide anti-inflammatory properties. Whether used as a preventative to gum disease or as an option once your pup is showing oral health issues, addressing inflammation will put your dog back on the road to good dental health. This is true for their gums and also their overall health. As a rule of thumb, standard curcumin is poorly absorbed. Look for a high-absorption curcumin supplement—one that's combined with a turmeric essential oil containing ar-turmerone.

Omega-3 fatty acids are another nutrient essential for your dog's oral health. The omega-3s needed for canine health include eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Yet omega-3 supplements can vary in quality so choose a product that offers omega-3s derived exclusively from the heads of Atlantic salmon and extracted using natural enzymes instead of chemicals. One easy way to determine the quality of your dog's supplement is to look for the words "phospholipids" and "peptides" on the label.

By following these simple steps, you can help your dog maintain healthy gums, keep teeth securely rooted, and foster fresher breath. Bonus? You'll once again enjoy those welcomed doggy kisses! ■



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FAST DOGGY DENTAL FACTS:



Bad breath can mean gum disease in a dog.

80%

While cavities are rare, a whopping 80 percent of dogs over the age of three develop oral disease.



Plaque turns into tartar. Left unattended, it will destroy the tooth and surrounding structures.

24-36

The bacteria that cause dental disease can resurface on a tooth every 24 to 36 hours, making daily brushing necessary.