



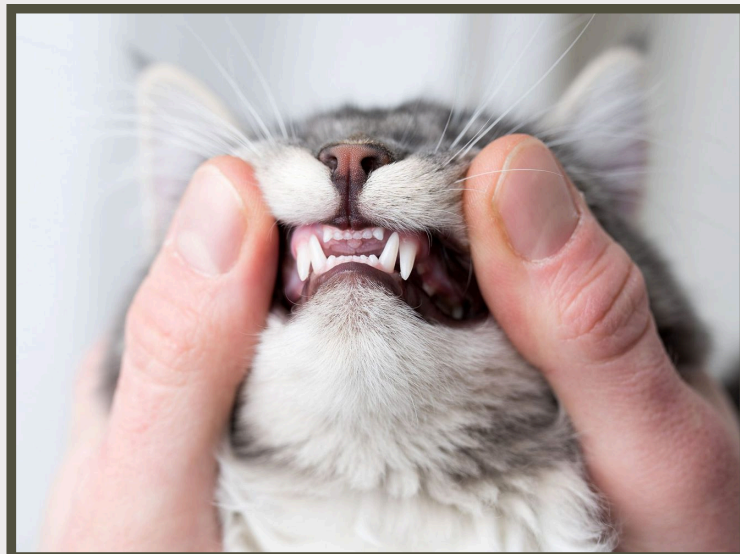
## Understanding Your Cat's Dental Exam and Professional Cleaning

When it comes to your cat's dental health, regular exams are crucial. The process typically begins with a comprehensive examination by your veterinarian. This initial evaluation will determine if your cat needs a dental cleaning and which procedures may be required. Your veterinarian will guide you through the steps and provide an estimate of what might be involved in the treatment.

### Pre-Procedure Preparations for a Cat's Dental Exam

Before scheduling a dental cleaning, your veterinarian will recommend preanesthetic blood tests to ensure your cat's kidneys and liver are functioning properly, as these organs are essential for processing anesthesia safely. If necessary, your vet may also check your cat's heart and abdominal health to make sure they're ready for the procedure.

Anesthesia is essential for conducting a thorough examination of your cat's teeth, allowing the veterinarian to assess each tooth individually and perform necessary procedures like dental X-rays. Without anesthesia, pets would need to be physically restrained for an extended period, sometimes up to one or two hours. Restraining an animal for such a long duration can be risky, particularly without a thorough understanding of the animal's medical history and health. The level of restraint required, combined with the anxiety and stress it can cause, may put the animal at risk, especially considering breed-specific predispositions to certain health concerns. Anesthesia allows us to safely perform the procedure while minimizing stress, avoiding prolonged restraint, and ensuring the best possible care.



## **What Happens During the Dental Cleaning?**

A professional dental cleaning involves a detailed inspection of your cat's teeth, scaling to remove plaque and tartar, and polishing to prevent future buildup. The process occurs while your cat is under general anesthesia, ensuring they remain calm and still throughout the procedure. The veterinarian and their team will thoroughly examine your cat's mouth, documenting any abnormalities they find. Using a dental probe, they will check for gum bleeding and periodontal pockets, areas where food can get trapped and lead to further dental decay if left untreated.

In cases where periodontal disease has progressed significantly, your cat may require extractions either during the procedure or later on. Your vet will discuss the findings and treatment options with you once the cleaning is complete.

## **The Process of Cleaning Your Cat's Teeth**

Once your cat is safely under anesthesia, the dental cleaning begins with scaling. Both hand scalers and ultrasonic tools are used to carefully remove plaque and tartar from both above and below the gumline.

Removing tartar beneath the gumline is crucial as it's the source of the most severe periodontal issues. After scaling, your cat's teeth will be polished to eliminate any microscopic scratches on the tooth surface and help reduce future plaque accumulation.

## **Why Can't I Clean My Cat's Teeth with a Human Dental Tool?**

While it might seem tempting to use a human dental scaler on your cat's teeth, there are several important reasons why this is not effective or safe:

- Only the tartar visible above the gumline would be removed, leaving plaque and tartar beneath the gums, which can lead to continued oral health problems.
- A conscious cat cannot safely have the inner surfaces of their teeth cleaned, and using a scaler can be dangerous for both you and your pet.
- Using instruments on your cat's teeth may cause microscopic damage to the enamel, worsening dental issues over time.
- Sudden movements can cause injury to your cat's gums with sharp instruments, leading to bleeding and discomfort.

## **Do I Need to Make an Appointment for a Dental Scaling and Polishing?**

Yes, a scheduled appointment with your veterinarian is required. Prior to the procedure, your vet will conduct pre-anesthetic tests and evaluate your cat for any underlying health conditions that may affect the procedure.



## **Preventing Tartar Build-Up After a Cleaning**

Tartar can start to form on your cat's teeth within just six hours after a cleaning. To minimize plaque accumulation, you'll need to follow a consistent home dental care routine. Regular tooth brushing is one of the most effective ways to prevent tartar buildup. Your veterinarian will provide instructions on how to properly brush or rinse your cat's teeth at home.

In addition to brushing, look for dental products and diets that are proven to reduce tartar and plaque. The Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) approves specific products based on scientific research that ensures their effectiveness. Check with your veterinarian for recommendations, or visit the VOHC website to see a list of accepted products.

## **Can I Use Human Toothpaste on My Cat?**

No, you should never use human toothpaste on your cat. Human toothpaste contains ingredients that are harmful if swallowed and often have higher salt content, which can be dangerous for cats. It's also crucial to avoid using baking soda to clean your cat's teeth, as it can upset your pet's digestive system if ingested.

## **Why Is Pet-Specific Toothpaste Recommended?**

Pet toothpaste is designed with your cat's safety in mind. These toothpastes are non-foaming and safe to swallow, which eliminates the risks associated with human toothpaste. Available in flavors like poultry, beef, malt, and mint, pet toothpaste is often more appealing to cats, making the brushing process easier for both you and your pet. Many of these products also contain enzymes that help break down plaque chemically, making brushing more effective and reducing the amount of time you need to spend on your cat's dental care routine.

By following your veterinarian's advice and maintaining a good oral hygiene routine at home, you can help ensure your cat's teeth stay healthy and their breath stays fresh.

