



Just like people, pets need to have their teeth taken care of. Sometimes, a tooth has to be surgically removed to stop pain or to keep dental disease from getting worse. Here's how to care for your pet after dental surgery, and some tips to keep their teeth healthy in the future.

### How Vets Take Care of Your Pet's Teeth

When a veterinarian checks your pet's teeth, they will give them medicine to make them sleepy (sedation), then look closely at each tooth and take x-rays to find problems that can't be seen just by looking, like broken teeth, bone loss, infections or root abscesses. If a tooth is causing pain or could lead to more serious health problems, the vet may need to remove it with surgery.

*Tip: If you adopted an animal from EHS you can find their surgery date in the medical history document. Look in the "Clinic Consultations" section at the bottom of the page.*

### Caring for Your Pet After Dental Surgery

- Offer soft food for at least 14 days after surgery. This can be wet food, and you can also soften their regular kibble with hot water. Soft food is needed to prevent the sutures from breaking and to keep food from getting stuck in their surgery site, which can lead to infection.

#### To soften their kibble:

1. Put it in a bowl large enough to hold the kibble and water.
  2. Boil water and add it to the bowl. The recommended amount of water to add is the same number of cups of food they get, so if your pet eats 1 cup of kibble use 1 cup of water.
  3. Let the kibble sit for at least 20 minutes and stir occasionally. To check if the kibble is soft enough take one and squish it between your fingers. All of it, including the middle, should be soft enough for you to squish.
  4. Let the kibble cool down and feed your pet.
- If they were prescribed medication for pain relief or antibiotics, make sure you give their medication and complete it.
  - Avoid chew toys, hard or textured toys and treats that could cut them, crack their teeth or undo the sutures, and avoid games like tug.
  - Monitor for signs infection, like abnormal smelly odor from their mouth, discharge, excessive bleeding and swelling.
  - Monitor for signs of pain, like avoiding eating, excessive drooling, increased vocalization and pawing at their mouth.



### Dental Care At Home

Once your pet's mouth has healed, you can keep their teeth healthy by brushing them every day. Daily brushing is the best way to stop plaque and tartar from building up and can help you avoid costly dental treatments later on.

Dental disease often starts under the gumline, where you can't see it. That's why it's important to have your vet check and clean your pet's teeth regularly to catch any problems early.

Along with brushing, your vet may recommend using dental chews, water additives, dental wipes or a special dental diet. You can also visit the Veterinary Oral Health Council's website at [www.vohc.org/accepted-products](http://www.vohc.org/accepted-products) to find a list of approved dental products for cats and dogs.

### Anesthesia-Free or Sedation-Free Dentistry

You might see teeth cleaning services offered by non-veterinarians, like groomers, pet stores or other businesses. These are often called anesthesia-free or sedation-free cleanings. They involve using a sharp tool to scrape plaque and tartar off the surface of the teeth — a process called *scaling*.

However, these services are **not** recommended for several important reasons:

- **They only clean what you can see.** These cleanings don't remove bacteria under the gumline, where dental disease starts. So, they only make the teeth look clean — they don't treat the real problem.
- **They don't find or fix dental issues.** Without sedation, vets can't take x-rays or do a full exam, so problems like infections, broken teeth or bone loss might be missed.
- **The providers doing them are not vets.** They're not trained to diagnose dental problems or give medical advice, and your pet doesn't get the care they would with a vet visit.
- **It can be very stressful for pets.** Since the animal is awake and held still for a long time, it can cause fear and stress in the moment and for future handling. If they move during the procedure, they could even be hurt by the sharp tools.

### Additional Resources

Find more free guides on our website by visiting: <https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com>

#### Did You Know ?

You can also ask us behavioural questions by emailing:

[askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com](mailto:askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com)