

PAWSITIVE TIMES

A newsletter for folks who love their dogs!

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Doggie Home Dental Care

How long would *you* go without brushing your teeth?



We know that to keep our mouths healthy we need to visit our dentist for regular exams and hygiene appointments, and to brush and floss daily. But unfortunately, preventative home dental care is not exactly a common practice when it comes to our canine companions.

Veterinarians are now seeing increasing numbers of animals whose most severe medical problems are dental problems. As with humans, periodontal disease can be very painful and lead to loose teeth, abscesses, and bone loss or infection. As bacterial growth continues to increase, the bacteria may enter the bloodstream. This can cause infection of the heart valves (endocarditis), liver, and kidneys.

To prevent oral disease, the number one health problem diagnosed in pets, it is essential to provide our dogs with good dental care, both professionally and at home.

A good dental care program for your dog includes regular visits to your veterinarian (which includes an oral exam), veterinary dental cleaning as advised to slow or stop the progression of periodontal disease, and daily home dental care.


Brushing your canine's canines

The procedure for getting your dog accustomed to getting his teeth brushed is the same for puppies and adult dogs. Each part of the process may take a few

days to a week before your dog is relaxed and ready to move on to the next step:

- 1) Let your dog taste some poultry flavored doggie toothpaste from your finger. Praise him as he licks. Continue until he looks forward to licking the paste.
- 2) Next, gently rub a bit of toothpaste on the teeth and gums in the front of the mouth. Praise and give him a tasty treat for being such a good dog!
- 3) Using a toothbrush specifically designed for dogs, let your dog lick some toothpaste applied to the bristles. Praise and treat.
- 4) When your dog is comfortably licking the paste from the toothbrush, lift the upper lip gently and place the brush at a 45° angle to the gumline. Gently move the brush back and forth over one or both of the large canine teeth. Give lots of praise and a yummy treat for bravery!
- 5) When your dog accepts having several teeth brushed, slowly increase the number of teeth you are brushing. Keep it happy!

There are also dental chews and toys available designed to help control plaque and tartar buildup.

Another benefit of making home dental care fun and rewarding for your dog? *You* will be rewarded with sweeter kisses from your best friend. 

"It freshens your breath and helps prevent tartar" Mel Gibson, while eating a dog biscuit at Harvard University, 1996



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The Great Escape

**Does your dog dash out the door?
Teach "wait" to prevent a tragedy**



Many years ago, long before I had aspirations of becoming a dog trainer, or was even aware of positive training techniques, my first dog, a four-year-old Lab named Max, dashed out the front door of our home, found his way to a nearby busy road and was struck by two cars, killing him instantly. It was a terrible tragedy for our family, and my wonderful memories of Max are tainted with guilt for having failed to protect him.

Fifteen years and six dogs later (three still here), with an education in dog behavior and positive training, you can bet your life that I teach my dogs to "wait" at the door when it is opened! By training your dog patiently, over several sessions, you can too. Here's how:

Put a leash on your dog and have someone hold his leash right inside your front (or back) door. Standing by the door, use the cue "Wait", pause for a couple of seconds, and if your dog stays put, say "Yes!" in a happy voice, and feed him a yummy treat. Repeat several times until your dog reliably waits for his treat. Now say "Wait" and open the door slightly, then close it. If your dog waits and does not attempt to go out the door, say "Yes!" and treat. Gradually open the door wider with each repetition, eventually taking a single step outside, return and close door, say "Yes!" and treat. When your dog waits for you to return when you take one step out the door, repeat the exercise taking two steps, then three steps and partially closing the door before you return, then finally walk out the door, close it completely, then open and return, saying "Yes!" and treating after each return. When your dog is reliably waiting at the door each time you go out and return, skip an occasional "Yes!" and treat, and replace with lavish praise. Continue to fade the treats slowly so that your dog will wait when you don't have a treat...but giving one occasionally will help to keep the behavior strong!

So why "wait"? This cue can save your dog's life. 🐾

TRAINING TIPS

- Using food to reward your dog is the fastest way to teach new behaviors
- Train when your dog is hungry
- Use training treats that are yummy (if you were hungry, would you work harder for saltines or a slice of pizza?)...try cheese, meatballs, hot dogs, Vienna sausages, chicken
- Your dog will work hard for *teeney weeney bits* of these foods (smaller than a pea!), but if you're worried about weight gain, cut back on food proportionately at mealtime on days when you train
- As an alternative to treats, try toys and food as reward
- Keep training sessions short (10-15 minutes) and have fun!



Pawsitive Fit, LLC
Puppy & Dog Training
Positive Methods for a Happy Best Friend



Pawsitive Fit offers private, in-home instruction in the Greater Baltimore area for people and their dogs. We are committed to using methods of positive reinforcement and reward, replacing the old-fashioned use of punishment, force and coercion. With individualized training programs tailored to your needs, Pawsitive Fit teaches you to effectively communicate with your dog, encouraging a relationship based on mutual trust and respect, and to have fun together while training.

Whether you need basic Good Manners training for your puppy or dog, or help with a specific behavioral problem, Pawsitive Fit can help. With flexible training options and scheduling times, our services are designed to meet the needs of busy clients who understand the importance of training their best friend.

For more information about our training and services, visit www.pawsitivefit.com

Happy training!

Susan Sarubin
Owner & Trainer
Pawsitive Fit, LLC

