

# 7 Breeds Prone to Dental Disease – Is Your Dog One?

You may be surprised by this list. It's not just little dogs. Some bigger dogs that you never thought would be prone actually are because of certain gum conditions, overbites and a propensity for tooth fractures. Don't ignore this.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The poor condition of a dog's teeth and gums can affect the health of his vital organs, such as the heart, kidneys and brain
- Some dog breeds are more prone to dental disease than others, including many small and toy breeds, flat-faced breeds like Pugs, and certain large breeds such as the Boxer and Labrador Retriever
- If your dog is predisposed to dental disease, there are many things you can do to maintain his oral health, including feeding the right diet, offering raw bones to chew, daily tooth brushing, and regular at-home and veterinary exams
- A little time spent each day brushing your dog's teeth can reap tremendous rewards in terms of her oral health and overall well-being
- Arrange for regular oral exams performed by your veterinarian. They will alert you to any existing or potential problems in your pet's mouth, and recommend professional teeth cleaning, if necessary

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published April 11, 2018.***

Many pet parents assume that the condition of their dog's teeth and gums has no influence on their overall health, but nothing could be further from the truth. According to veterinary dentist Dr. Jan Bellows of Hometown Animal Hospital and Dental Clinic in Weston, Florida, in an interview with PetMD:

*"The toxins from periodontal disease are absorbed into the dog's blood stream. As the kidneys, liver and brain filter the blood, small infections occur causing permanent and at times fatal organ damage."*<sup>1</sup>

The bacteria present in periodontal disease produce toxins that can damage the delicate tissues of the heart, kidneys and brain. It's also possible the bacteria can travel in the bloodstream and colonize within the tissues of heart valves, the kidneys and the liver.

When plaque is allowed to build up on your dog's teeth, within a few days it hardens into tartar. Tartar adheres to the teeth and irritates the gums. Irritated gums result in an inflammatory condition called gingivitis. Pets with gingivitis have red rather than pink gums, and they often also have stinky breath.

If the tartar isn't removed from your pet's teeth, it builds up under the gums, eventually causing them to pull away from the teeth. This creates small pockets in the gum tissue that trap additional bacteria in the mouth. At this stage, your dog has developed irreversible periodontal disease, which not only causes considerable pain, but can also result in abscesses, infections, loose teeth and bone loss.

## Is Your Dog a 'High Risk for Dental Disease' Breed?

How quickly tooth and gum problems develop in your dog's mouth depends on a number of factors, including age, overall health, diet, genetics, and the frequency and quality of dental care she receives. And while periodontal disease is the most prevalent disease in all dogs, some breeds are at higher risk, including the following per PetMD:<sup>2</sup>

- **Collies and Shelties** — These breeds tend to have an overbite in which the lower jaw is shorter than normal and in relationship to the upper jaw.
- **Pugs and other brachycephalic breeds** — Brachys (e.g., Shih Tzus, Bulldogs, Lhasa Apsos, Boston Terriers) typically have malocclusions, meaning their teeth don't line up as they should, as well as crowding.
- **Yorkies and other small and toy breeds** — These little dogs tend to have "persistent" baby teeth, meaning they don't fall out, and simply sit on top of the permanent teeth that grow in underneath them.
- **Chihuahuas** — Chis have small mouths and the same number of teeth (42) every dog has. There's often just not enough room in those tiny mouths for all those teeth, so there's crowding.
- **Dachshunds** — Doxies have narrow muzzles that make them prone to developing pockets in their gums created by tooth and bone loss. Bacteria thrive in periodontal pockets.
- **Boxers** — Boxers, along with Great Danes, Mastiffs, Bulldogs and Collies often develop an overgrowth or thickening of the gums — a condition called gingival hyperplasia. Gingival hyperplasia is typically caused either by an inflammatory response to plaque and bacteria on the teeth, or by a reaction to certain medications.
- **Shih Tzus** — This small breed, as well as Lhasa Apsos, the Maltese and the Havanese, are prone to delayed tooth eruption. In other words, they get their teeth later than normal. The problem arises if a tooth or teeth don't erupt at all.
- **Labrador Retrievers** — **Labradors** and other large, active breeds tend to get more tooth fractures than other breeds.

Just because your canine companion is genetically predisposed to dental disease doesn't mean he's destined to a lifetime of mouth problems. There are many things you can do keep his teeth clean and his gums in good condition.

## 5 Tips to Preserve Your Dog's Oral Health

1. **Diet** — Your dog's diet plays a significant role in the amount of tartar she collects on her teeth. Raw diets — even prepared, ground raw diets — help control tartar. Raw ground bone is a gentle dental abrasive that acts like fine sandpaper when chewed, which helps remove debris stuck on teeth.

The meat contains natural enzymes, and in addition, raw food doesn't stick to teeth, unlike starchy kibble. It's a complete myth that kibble helps keep your pet's teeth clean. Kibble is no better for your pet's teeth than crunchy human food is for your teeth. That being said, even raw fed pets acquire plaque and tartar, so don't assume food alone will save your dog from dental disease.

Additionally, there are a few supplements that research shows improves gum health and the oral microbiome, including ubiquinol and probiotics. Adding these supplements to your dog's protocol can improve her oral defenses and reduce the rate at which degeneration occurs.

2. **Raw bones** — For dogs, chewing plays an important role in removing plaque and tartar from teeth. Even though there are plenty of toys and food products on the market that can be of some help, raw bones are really the best option, and few dogs will turn them down.

It's important the bones are raw because cooked bones can splinter and damage your pet's gastrointestinal (GI) tract. The size depends on the size of your dog and whether he's such an eager chewer that he risks injuring himself or even breaking teeth. Your dog should always be supervised when he's working on a bone to minimize the risk of choking or tooth damage, and raw bones should be refrigerated between chewing sessions.

3. **Daily brushing** — Brush your pet's teeth, preferably every day. A little time spent each day brushing your dog's teeth can reap tremendous rewards in terms of her oral health and overall well-being.
4. **Regular at-home mouth inspections** — Your dog should allow you to open his mouth, look inside and feel around for loose teeth or unusual lumps or bumps on the tongue, under the tongue, along the gum line and across the roof. After you do this a few times, you'll become aware of any changes that occur from one inspection to the next. You should also make note of any difference in the smell of his breath that isn't diet-related.
5. **Veterinary checkups** — Arrange for regular oral exams performed by your veterinarian. They will alert you to any existing or potential problems in your pet's mouth, and recommend professional teeth cleaning, if necessary.

If you're conscientious about your dog's dental home care, and she doesn't have any special situations that predispose her to tartar buildup or other dental issues, she may never need a professional cleaning by a veterinarian. However, pets with extreme tartar buildup, badly inflamed gums or oral infections need extra help.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [PetMD, 5 Consequences of Rotten Dog Teeth](#)

<sup>2</sup> [PetMD, 8 Breeds Prone to Dental Disease](#)

---