

## Clinical Signs of Oral or Dental Disease in Pets

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*Date Published: 08/04/2006*

*Date Reviewed/Revised: 12/18/2014*

1. Bad breath (halitosis)
2. Broken tooth/teeth
3. Excessive drooling
4. Reluctance to eat, especially dry food, or to play with chew toys
5. Chewing with or favoring one side of the mouth
6. Pawing at or rubbing the muzzle/mouth
7. Bleeding from the mouth
8. Loss of symmetry of the muzzle and/or lower jaw
9. Swollen/drainage tracts under (or in front of) the eye
10. Sudden change in behavior (aggressive or withdrawn)
11. Chronic eye infections or drainage with no exact cause or cure
12. Inability to open or close the mouth
13. Chronic sneezing
14. Discolored tooth/teeth
15. Abnormal discharge from nose
16. A mass/growth in the mouth

If you see any of these clinical signs, take your pet to your veterinarian for a complete oral examination. Your veterinarian may need to sedate or anesthetize your pet, in order to complete the examination.. Dental radiographs (X-rays), not “skull films” (a radiograph of the entire head) may be necessary in order to make a proper diagnosis. Intra-oral radiographs are essential for deciding what’s going on and what needs to be done. If your veterinarian is unable to take dental radiographs, is unsure of a diagnosis, or if the treatment is beyond the clinic’s level of dental experience, ask for a referral to a veterinarian who has an advanced certification in dentistry. (See [American Veterinary Dental College](#) or [Academy of Veterinary Dentistry](#)).

Preventive care involves brushing and daily examination of your pet’s mouth. Brushing needs to be done at least 3 to 4 times a week, if you want to make a difference in your pet’s oral health. Plus, by looking in your pet’s mouth while you are brushing, you will be more aware of any oral abnormalities (oral masses, bad breath, missing teeth) or the increased redness of the gums that indicates periodontal disease and the need for a trip to the “Animal Dentist.”

By working with your primary-care veterinarian and a dental specialist, you are sure to increase your companion’s quality of life by providing proper and timely dental and oral healthcare.

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