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4 *natural* WAYS TO KEEP YOUR DOG'S TEETH CLEAN

By Deva Khalsa, VMD



Brushing a dog's teeth can be a challenge if he's not one of the few "co-operative angels" who don't mind having their mouths touched. Some people are also hesitant about subjecting their dogs to dental cleaning procedures that include anesthesia and can be expensive. So are there additional ways to keep your dog's teeth clean, both naturally and simply? Yes! There are many excellent, effective, all-natural options that truly work to keep your dog's teeth clean and his gums healthy. In this article, I'll look at four.



1. Enzymes

Patients of mine with advanced heart conditions, who needed tartar removed from their teeth, could not go under anesthesia. As a solution, I would suggest Prozyme, an inexpensive digestive enzyme readily available in pet stores, which works to effectively digest all the tartar off the teeth. I'd have the owner pack the enzyme in the upper right quadrant of the dog's mouth once a day for one week, then move to the upper left quadrant for the next week, and so on. The Prozyme would very effectively handle and clean up all the tarter.

COMMERCIAL KIBBLE AND BISCUITS DON'T CLEAN TEETH

We've all become victims of advertising. For example, many well-known commercial dry dog foods and dog biscuits (which are basically kibble in bone-shaped snacks) have been marketed for years as being good for cleaning a dog's teeth. With all due respect, this is akin to flossing with potato chips. Avoid these products if you want good natural dental health for your dog.

Many doggy toothpastes also contain enzymes that kill bacteria and help remove tartar. Companies such as Zymox and Virbac make enzymatic toothpastes for dogs. These may not be an option if your dog refuses to have his teeth brushed, but if you are able to do it and he doesn't mind, I suggest a product that also removes and digests tartar.

2. Herbal extracts and essential oils

Grape seed extract, grapefruit seed extract, thyme oil, neem oil and peppermint oil combined in a safe preparation by VetzLife work very effectively to both dissolve and prevent tartar, and heal the gums. The product comes in a spray and a gel and is really easy to apply, which is a big plus.

Leba III, meanwhile, contains rose and mint extracts. It's another very effective product for dissolving tarter and supporting dental health. This product is also available as an easy-to-use spray.



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3. Homeopathy

If your dog's teeth seem to build up tartar like nobody's business, a homeopathic remedy called *Fragaria* may solve the problem. Purchase it from a homeopathic pharmacy as *Fragaria 6x*, and administer one or two pellets twice a day for a month. Homeopathy is an energy medicine so a pellet or two – that melts in the mouth and is not mixed with food – is fine for any size of dog.


4. Raw bones

Raw bones not only taste good and are fun to chew, but the process of gnawing on them stimulates the gums, exercises the jawbone – and yes, removes tartar from the teeth! A good raw bone will provide your dog with hours of pleasure and help ensure his dental health. It's sort of like a toothbrush substitute, and it's certainly preferable to dental surgery for your dog.

However, you need to make sure you give him the right kind of bone. I'm talking about the large femur and knucklebones from a cow, which are practically impossible to swallow or chip. You just have to watch and make sure the bone doesn't get too small, and if it does, exchange it for a new one.

Keep in mind that the wrong kind can result in a variety of problems, some merely inconvenient (getting stuck between the teeth) and other serious (lodging in the stomach or piercing the intestinal wall). The most dangerous bones are those that can splinter and/or be swallowed, like any cooked chicken and turkey bones, or cooked bones from steaks, cuts of lamb, veal, beef and pork.

When you give your dog the right type of bone, however, you can relax and enjoy the fact that his teeth and gums will be all the healthier for it.

Isn't it nice to know you can practice simple, natural, proactive dental care, without struggling to brush an uncooperative dog's teeth or taking him in for frequent dental procedures? 

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Gnawing on raw bones stimulates the gums, exercises the jawbone, and removes tartar from the teeth.



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