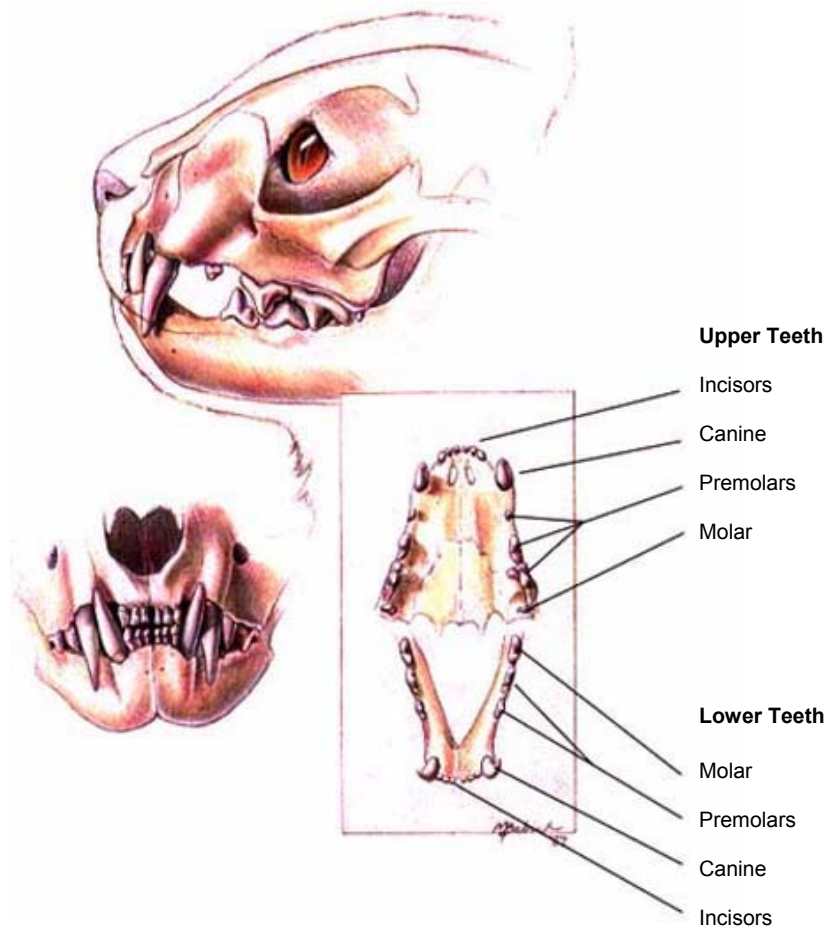




Reducing the Risks of Feline Periodontal Disease



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Periodontal disease, or inflammation of the structures that support the teeth, is the primary cause of tooth loss in cats. Dental care in young adults will prevent irreversible damage. This client education sheet will help you learn more about the risks of periodontal disease and will review your veterinarian's plan for keeping your cat healthy, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

Risk Factor Management for Feline Periodontal Disease

A risk factor is a condition or characteristic that predisposes an animal to disease. For example, high blood pressure in human beings increases the risk of stroke and heart and kidney failure. The importance of identifying risk factors is that sometimes the risk factor (high blood pressure, for example) can be eliminated or controlled to prevent or lessen the severity of the disease (stroke, for example). Veterinarians also recognize risk factors in pets. The extent to which such risk factors are managed will help determine the length and quality of your pet's life.

Risk Factors

Periodontal disease is very common. Up to 60% of cats have some degree of periodontal disease. Although periodontal disease is found more frequently in older pets, its effects start in younger animals. Inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) often develops by the time a pet is one or two years old and progresses to irreversible changes by the time the pet is 4 to 6 years old.

Risk factors for periodontal disease include the following:

- Advanced age.
- Malocclusion (poor alignment) of teeth.
- Chewing on hard objects.
- Retained baby teeth.
- Other diseases, such as chronic kidney failure.

Detecting Risk Factors

Frequent and complete veterinary checkups are especially important as your pet ages. These checkups can help detect underlying causes of periodontal disease as well as the disease itself. These checkups are warranted once a year, or more frequently according to your veterinarian's instructions.

Managing Risk Factors

Your veterinarian will prescribe a routine dental care program for your cat. This program will eliminate or minimize as many risk factors as possible. A dental cleaning that includes removal of plaque and calculus by your veterinarian is the first step.

Home care is the most important part of therapy for periodontal disease. Frequent removal of plaque from your cat's teeth will help prevent periodontal disease and tooth loss. Plaque removal should begin in young animals, because periodontal disease starts when pets are young.

Your veterinarian will show you how to care for your pet's teeth. The key to plaque removal is to make it a pleasant routine for your pet. Begin by handling your pet's muzzle. (You can hold a cat in your lap while you do this.) When your pet is comfortable with this, you can try to brush a small number of teeth, such as the incisor (front) teeth. When your pet accepts this, you can gradually work the brush around the sides of your pet's mouth to reach the premolar and molar teeth. If your pet won't tolerate a brush, you should try a soft cloth. Your veterinarian has special toothpastes for your pet.

Your veterinarian will probably schedule routine office visits to check your pet's teeth. These visits will allow him or her to help you combat periodontal disease through dental scalings and other necessary procedures designed to help your pet keep its teeth.

Nutritional Plan

If your pet has periodontal disease, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change. Optimal nutrition provides for a pet's need based on age and activity level, and reduces the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, calcium, phosphorus, protein, and calories. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and also reduce the tartar and plaque that contribute to periodontal disease and bad breath include Hill's® Prescription Diet® Canine t/d® and Feline t/d®.

Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, or hand feeding for the first few days. Do not add water to your cat's food though. Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

Presented as an educational service by



Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: _____

Patient's Name: _____

Medication(s): _____

Nutritional Recommendation: _____

Follow-Up Appointment: _____

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.