

DENTAL PROCEDURES – FAQ:

Why has a dental procedure been recommended for my pet?

Dental health is an important part of your pet's overall health. We recommend that your pet's teeth and gums be checked at least once a year by a veterinarian, and that they receive a dental assessment and cleaning under anaesthesia on a routine basis. Most dental disease occurs below the gumline, where you can't see it. Early detection and treatment are critical because advanced periodontal disease can cause health problems and pain for your pet.

During a dental procedure, radiographs (x-rays) are used to evaluate the health of the jaw and the tooth roots below the gumline. The teeth are cleaned to remove the cause of periodontal disease at the source, which is the plaque bacteria below the gumline. Infected, painful, or broken teeth are extracted. These steps help us keep your pet's teeth and gums healthy, and help provide your pet with a mouth that is free of infection and pain.

Why do dental procedures require anesthesia? Is anesthesia safe?

Anesthesia is a necessary part of veterinary dentistry because pets need to be very still for x-rays, and to allow cleaning under the gumline with sharp, precise tools. It is impossible to fully assess your pet's mouth or properly clean their teeth without anesthesia.

Although anesthesia will always have risks, it's safer now than ever. Our pre-operative examination helps us to assess for any health conditions that may impact anesthesia, so that we can choose the safest and most appropriate protocol for your pet. For older pets, we use labwork to help us screen for underlying problems as well. During the anesthesia, pets are monitored closely by a dedicated veterinary technician as well as a variety of monitoring equipment.

What is involved with a dental procedure?

When your pet arrives for their dental procedure, he or she will be examined, sedated, and then have an IV fluid line placed before being anesthetized. Throughout anesthesia, your pet's vital parameters including heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure will be monitored.

The dental procedure begins with a comprehensive examination of your pet's mouth. This includes probing all teeth and documenting calculus accumulation, gingivitis, gum recession, infection, and loose, broken, missing, extra or misaligned teeth. All teeth are then x-rayed. After the oral exam and xrays are completed, a member of our team will call you to discuss the findings and recommended treatment.

Although we prefer to save teeth whenever possible, extractions are necessary in cases of severe periodontal disease, tooth fracture and tooth resorption. It is much

better to have fewer teeth than a painful mouth, and our pets do very well with missing teeth. Extraction sites are cleaned and then sutured closed to decrease the chance of infection and speed healing.

The final step of your pet's dental procedure is a thorough cleaning, including scaling (to remove plaque and tartar) and polishing of all teeth followed by application of a fluoride treatment.

Your pet will then recover from anesthesia and we will call or text you to update on a time to go home. Your pet will go home the same afternoon or evening of their procedure.

Pain control is an essential part of dentistry. We use numbing injections (local anesthetic or nerve block) before extracting teeth and pets are sent home with pain medication(s) to ensure they are comfortable after their procedure.

What should I expect after my pet's dental procedure?

Your pet may be a bit sleepy or restless after their anesthesia. They may also have a reduced interest in food for the first few hours. For the first night after their procedure, we recommend preventing your pet from doing stairs, or jumping because they may be less well-coordinated than normal. Most pets return to their normal appetite and activity within 24 hours of their procedure.

If your pet has had dental extractions, you may see a bloody-tinge to their saliva for a few days after their procedure. They should eat softened food for the amount of time recommended by our team. Pets with extractions will go home on 1 or 2 pain control medications to ensure their comfort in the post-operative period.

We will contact you a couple of days after their hospital stay to see how they are doing. If you have any concerns that your pet is not eating properly, uncomfortable, or you have another concern, please contact us. About 7-10 days after the dental procedure, we recommend a complimentary recheck of any dental extraction sites to ensure appropriate healing.

What are potential complications of a dental procedure?

Fortunately, complications after dental surgery are not common. Minor complications include post-operative discomfort, bruising at the IV site, or opening of the extraction site. In rare cases, more serious complications such as jaw fracture are possible, particularly in small patients with very severe dental disease. Occasionally we may make the decision to leave a small piece of root in the jaw, when removal would require more extensive surgery. In most cases, however, pets recover quickly from their procedure and heal after extractions within 1-2 weeks.