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Complete Dental Care Guide for Puppies & Dogs

> **Dental disease is one of the most common health problems in dogs. By age three, most dogs show signs of periodontal disease. A complete dental plan includes home care, safe chew options, and professional evaluations.**

Step 1: Start Early

Begin dental handling as a puppy. Say "Teeth," gently lift the lips, and reward calm behavior. Gradually introduce dental wipes before moving to brushing.

Step 2: Daily Home Care

- Begin with veterinary-approved dental wipes (such as Dechra wipes).
- Progress to brushing with a small finger brush or soft dog toothbrush.
- Use dog-approved toothpaste only (never human toothpaste).
- Aim for daily brushing; minimum 3-4 times weekly.
- Focus on outer tooth surfaces, especially back molars.

Step 3: Support with Safe Dental Chews

- Choose VOHC-approved dental chews.
- Use nightly once adult teeth are fully erupted.
- Select size-appropriate, slightly flexible products.
- Remember: chews support brushing – they do not replace it.

Step 4: Plaque Prevention Additives

Water additives or dental powders may help reduce plaque when used consistently. These should be used as part of a comprehensive dental plan.

Avoid High-Risk Chews

- Antlers
- Real bones (raw or cooked)
- Hooves
- Hard nylon bones
- Yak cheese chews

If you cannot indent the item with your thumbnail, it is likely too hard and may fracture teeth.

Professional Dental Care

- Even with excellent home care, most dogs will eventually need professional dental cleaning.
- Professional care includes anesthesia, full oral examination, dental radiographs, and scaling above and below the gumline.

Consistent home care combined with professional evaluation prevents pain, infection, and costly dental procedures later in life. Lake Pine Animal Hospital is happy to help you build a dental plan for your pet.