

Ask the Vet: **Prevent disease with timely cleanings**

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The right time to give your pet a bath is before the skin is itchy and the hair coat is oily and smelly. It is nice to prevent problems and to maintain a consistent condition of excellent health rather than roller coaster along with abnormalities followed by healing periods followed by more abnormalities and so on.

Our pets' bodies, like our own, grow healthier and more resistant to disease the longer they are maintained in a healthful state. Despite remarkable modern technology, each living being is given just one body to inhabit during life. It makes sense to take care of that body to the best of our abilities.

The same idea holds true for oral care. When halitosis and gingival redness and swelling are noticeable in your pet's mouth, the healthy condition of the mouth has been lost. With mouth odor, gingival redness or bleeding and visible calculus present, a pet's Oral ATP procedure will take more time and may involve more procedures than if the mouth had been kept healthy.

After early morning admission to the hospital, pre-emptive pain medication and medication to help the pet relax is given right away to help ease the pet's worries and smooth general anesthesia. Intravenous fluid therapy is administered for maintenance of blood pressure, hydration and direct venous access for medications such as additional pain medicine and antibiotics if needed. General anesthesia is safely controlled by delivery of an inhalant anesthetic by way of an endotracheal tube. This special tube is gently placed in the pet's trachea to ensure a clear open airway and to protect the trachea and lungs from moisture and loose debris in the mouth.

A is for assessment in our Oral ATP procedure. Radiographic images of all teeth are evaluated for abnormalities of tooth and supporting jaw bone structures. This is the stage when we find the biggest surprises. Radiographs reveal disease that lies hidden by the gingiva and the bone of the jaws. With radiographs, we learn about the density of the teeth and supporting bone, the contour of the pulp canal within each tooth, the width of the periodontal space and the contour and integrity of the tooth roots. Some common abnormalities found include fractures, resorption of tooth structure, bone loss from bacterial infection, tooth root damage from chewing on hard objects, unerupted teeth, dentigerous cysts, congenital defects of the tooth and roots present without crowns.

Assessment also involves physical examination of each tooth for its amount of calculus, staining, mobility, position or displacement (such as rotation or crowding), viability and enamel defects. Probing around each tooth identifies and grades the degree of gingivitis and periodontal ligament disease. The other structures and symmetry of the mouth also is evaluated. All of this information is recorded on the pet's dental chart.

T is for treatment. Calculus and debris that includes hair and trapped food material is removed from the tooth surface, gingival folds and gingival sulcus. With a clean mouth, necessary gingival or tooth extraction surgery is completed next followed by post-surgery radiographs to ensure accuracy of the surgery. When surgery is needed, a local numbing anesthetic is used to maximize comfort at the surgical sites and prevent the need for deepening the level of general anesthesia. These pain-control techniques improve the safety of the anesthetic procedure for your pet. The treatment stage is completed with tooth polishing, fluoride treatment and application of a plaque-prevention substance.

Awakening from anesthesia and recovery after the Oral ATP procedure follows with rest for the pet including assessment for comfort. Meanwhile, notes, recommendations and medications to go home are prepared to explain the findings and treatments performed and to advise the next steps in the P, or plan.

The Oral ATP procedure can be quite complex and lengthy when severe disease is present. If performed early and as often as needed, then it will be shorter, less expensive and very effective for disease prevention. We suspect that our pets prefer prevention over treatment. Avoiding disease and treating it early when it exists is always better. It's the same as giving a bath on time / with some technological differences.