

How to brush your kitten's teeth

(and why it's important)

Teaching your kitten to expect—and even like—dental care is possible and supports her long-term health.

We know that plaque on the teeth can harden into tartar very quickly. If you do your part to remove the plaque before this occurs, you're helping your kitten's overall health and comfort. Kittens can learn to tolerate tooth brushing and even seek it (really!). Here's how to get started with your kitten ...

Brush basics

First, pick a toothbrush. You have a lot of options, including a brush that looks like yours (make sure you can tell the difference!) and a soft rubbery brush that fits over your finger. Choose the one you feel you'll be able to safely and comfortably use. If you can't find a brush you like, try using a washcloth to clean your kitten's teeth. You can also ask your veterinary team for guidance.

Start slow

Start teaching your kitten that toothbrushing is fun by giving special treats every time you show your kitten the brush. Slowly introduce the brush into the mouth, but never advance past where she's comfortable.

Move forward, and if your kitten withdraws from your touch, go back to where she was still happy. Don't use force, and don't have an end goal of brushing every tooth on the first try. Your kitten has baby teeth, so you have time to introduce the idea before the adult ones come in. Take your time and keep it positive to avoid creating aversions. If you start a power struggle with your kitten, no one wins.

Paste possibilities

You can also try using a toothpaste made specifically for pets. This can help make the experience more fun for your kitten because they taste great. Let her try out different flavors to find what she likes best. However, do *not* use a toothpaste meant for people.



Advance a little

Once your kitten is more comfortable, you can work up to longer brushing periods. Praise and reward her tolerance along the way. If you keep the toothbrush in a drawer or container, store other goodies there too so she can learn that opening that drawer always means great things. Then the toothbrush is just another one of those great things you do together. Kittens understand mutual grooming, so take advantage of her natural tolerance.

**Need more tips for keeping your kitten's teeth free from plaque and tartar?
Don't hesitate to ask a member of the veterinary team for help!**