



What Is Oral Disease?

Oral disease is infection throughout the mouth. This is by far the most common problem in veterinary medicine, but there are generally only subtle to no clinical signs. However, patients afflicted with dental disease are quite often in pain, despite the lack of clinical signs. Oral disease can lead to significant localized problems, including oronasal fistulas (communication between the oral cavity and the nasal cavity resulting in nasal congestion and discharge), pathologic fractures (pain and broken jaw), tooth root abscesses (infection and swelling of the tooth), osteomyelitis (infection of the bone surrounding the tooth), and increased incidence of oral cancer.

Infected gums and teeth aren't just a problem in the mouth; the heart, kidneys, intestinal tract, and joints may also be affected by systemic infection. The tartar and any infected areas of the mouth contain a multitude of bacteria than can spread to other parts of the body. There is also evidence of increased risk of diabetes, diabetic complications, and shorter lifespans. Oral disease progresses in stages, but if caught early, you can prevent further damage and save as many teeth as possible.

Signs Indicating Oral Disease:

- Bad breath
- Tartar
- Inflamed gums
- Missing/broken teeth.
- Reluctance to eat or play with toys
- Bleeding gums
- Eroded teeth
- Failing to groom (cats)
- Lethargy
- Drooling
- Teeth chattering

How to Prevent and Treat Oral Disease

Oral disease is both painful and preventable. With regular dental care, you can prevent some of the more serious side effects. Our goal for your pet is to provide proper dental care to help them retain their teeth and live pain free, improving the quality and longevity of their life. At Warrick Veterinary Clinic, we have special training and interest in oral health. We have adopted a dental staging program to help improve our patients' oral health.

Dental staging is important because even with meticulous awake oral examination, the diagnosis of oral disease must include dental radiology. The full extent of what is going on in the mouth is hidden from view in the awake animal. Until the patient can be fully assessed, the complete health of all 42 teeth in the dog or 30 teeth in the cat is unknown.



Why Stage:

- Shorter anesthetic episodes
 - Oral surgery requires time and attention to detail. Shorter anesthetic episodes equals safer anesthesia. Staging breaks up total oral surgical time into small episodes rather than long marathon sessions, improving your pet's safety.
- Removes tartar and bacteria
 - Healthy oral tissue is necessary for surgical site closure, patient comfort, and therapy success.
- Decreases systemic antibiotic use
 - This preserves beneficial GI flora and decreases the development of antibiotic-resistant microbes.
- Stage 2 treatment discussion
- More accurate and planned procedure pricing

Stage 1: Diagnostics, Scaling, and Polishing

- Fasting
 - Your pet will need to be fasted the evening before the teeth cleaning for the anesthesia.
- Pre-anesthetic bloodwork
 - This is a check on the overall health of your pet to make sure that liver, kidneys, and blood counts are within normal ranges and to reduce possible risks prior to the anesthesia
- Anesthetized oral exam with charting, full mouth dental radiographs, and dental cleaning
 - The teeth cleaning itself is similar to a human dental cleaning. It includes tartar removal and checking for cavities, gingival (gum) pockets, loose teeth, and any growths on the gums or palate. The last part of the teeth cleaning is polishing and application of fluoride. The polishing is to smooth the tooth after tartar removal, as the tartar pits the tooth. A smooth tooth surface encourages less tartar formation compared to a roughened tooth.
- Clindoral, if needed



- Antibiotic gel applied into gingival pockets to help with periodontal ligament reattachment that can help save the tooth
- Oral biopsy, if warranted
- Discharge appointment
 - Discussion of oral findings and plan the next part of dental therapy and home care

Stage 2: Oral Treatment

- Fasting
 - Your pet will need to be fasted the evening before the dental procedure for the anesthesia.
- Oral surgery
 - Surgical extraction: gingival flaps created to allow proper closure of tooth extraction site
 - Simple extraction: simple elevation of tooth that does not require gingival flaps
- Bone grafts: allows for more bone growth in extraction sites to help prevent fractures
- Oral restorations: restore smooth structure of tooth where enamel has fractured to relieve sensitivity and help prevent tooth root infection (similar to fillings in people)

