

Monitoring for Periodontal Disease (PD) in Dogs



Examining each dog's teeth and gums regularly, such as once a month, is the best way to detect and treat disease or injury early.

STEP 1

Gently pull back the lips and cheeks in order to see the teeth and gums. Inspect both upper and lower jaw on both sides of the mouth. **Don't forget to look at the back teeth.**



STEP 2

Gently open the mouth as wide as the dog will allow to inspect the inside (nearest the tongue) areas of the teeth, both sides, and upper and lower jaws.



PRACTICAL TIP



When visually assessing, it is best to avoid causing distress at all steps. Handle the dog gently, and only do what the dog will comfortably allow. This will be a better experience for the dog so he or she will be more likely to cooperate with future exams, and it decreases the risk of bites to the caretaker.



No Disease (Grade 0)

Gums: normal, healthy
Teeth: no tartar, no loose or missing teeth



Gingivitis (Grade I)

Gums: mild redness
Teeth: mild tartar, no loose or missing teeth



Early Periodontitis (Grade II)

Gums: redness and swelling
Teeth: mild to moderate tartar, no missing teeth but some may be loose



Moderate Periodontitis (Grade III)

Gums: redness, swelling, may bleed with gentle touch or chewing, may be recessed in areas (a)
Teeth: moderate to severe amount of tartar (b), there may be loose or missing teeth



Severe Periodontitis (Grade IV)

Gums: severe redness, inflammation, bleed easily, pus may be present
Teeth: large amount of tartar, tooth root exposure, loose and missing teeth are likely

Note any broken, loose, or missing teeth. Note any discharge (pus), blood, redness, or swelling of the gums.

If you see these or any other abnormal conditions, **consult with your veterinarian** for treatment options.

This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to provide information about PD in dogs. For more information, refer to the other topics covered in the series ("Canine PD" and "Preventive Care for PD in Dogs").

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

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