

## Has Oral Hygiene Gone to the Dogs?

Dell Ariel Goodrick, DDS, FAGD, FALD

In past articles, I have pointed out the connection between your oral health and your overall health. Scientific research is showing how periodontal disease increases the probability and complications of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and premature and low birth weight babies. With the mounting evidence of the correlation between oral hygiene and systemic diseases, it makes perfect sense that the Veterinary medicine community has started to highlight the connection as well.

Periodontal disease is the most common disease among dogs, according to the American Animal Hospital Association. It affects more than 8 out of 10 dogs over 3 years of age. The symptoms of periodontal disease in animals is exactly the same as in humans; bad breath, red and swollen gums, yellow-brown crust (tartar) near the gum line, loose or missing teeth, discomfort when mouth or gums are touched and possible decreased appetite or weight loss due to difficulty chewing. Veterinarians recognize that bacteria from the oral infection have a clear path to the bloodstream and vital organs. The organs with the highest blood flow are the most susceptible to infection; lungs, heart, kidneys, liver and even the brain. Veterinary literature concludes that damage to these organs caused by infection can shorten the lives of dogs and cats...You think?

Guess what Veterinarians are suggesting? Of course, Prevention! Just as with humans, it starts at home with effective home care; brushing, and in our case flossing on a regular basis. Also, routine visits for professional cleanings.

If this makes sense to you (and your pets) then you owe it to yourself to pay attention to your oral hygiene. Remember, the chew toy that you got for Christmas isn't a substitute for visiting an oral health care professional.

Dr. Goodrick and the team at A Unique Dental Experience® wish you all a very healthy new year. Call 254-4000 or visit our website at [www.drdell.com](http://www.drdell.com).