



## Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

### Home Dental Care for Cats

Cats use their teeth for grasping, tearing and chewing food. Proper care of your cat's teeth is just as important as proper care of your teeth. General health is improved by eliminating tooth infections and related gum disease. Most owners believe that gum disease will not occur until their cat becomes aged. However, this is not true. Gum disease has been diagnosed in cats only two years old.

Regular dental checkups performed by a veterinarian are very important. He/she can perform professional teeth cleaning to remove accumulated tartar and plaque, and remove any infected teeth. These procedures are performed under anesthesia.

After your cat has its teeth professionally cleaned you can provide daily dental care to control the buildup of tartar and plaque. Begin the process

by slowly acclimating your cat to being handled around the muzzle and opening its mouth. After your cat completely trusts you, soak a piece of gauze in a dilute solution of hydrogen peroxide or salt water and gently rub its teeth. This should be done daily if possible. Never use toothpastes for humans because they cause excessive salivation and if swallowed may result in gastrointestinal upsets.

### Vestibular Syndrome is Common in Cats

At first glance an owner may misinterpret their cat's rolling, circling and tilting head to be an over-reaction to inhaling catnip or bizarre playful behavior. However, these can be just some of the signs of a common nervous disorder in cats known as *feline vestibular syndrome*. It affects the peripheral part of the vestibular system (parts of the inner ear which influence balance).

The onset is usually sudden, often with vomiting and loss of appetite as the earliest signs, followed by head tilting, circling, rolling and loss of balance. The veterinarian's diagnosis is

based on results from the physical examination and skull radiographs. Anesthesia is required for the latter procedure.

Vestibular syndrome can be caused by middle or inner ear infections, congenital disorders, drug intoxications, traumatic injury to the head, or tumors in the inner ear. When no apparent cause can be identified, it is referred to as idiopathic.

Since vestibular syndrome is a common problem in cats, owners should be alert to the distinctive signs of the disease. Cats displaying signs of the disease should be examined and treated by a veterinarian. The idiopathic syndrome is most common in the summer and cats usually recover without specific treatment. Follow-up consultation with the veterinarian is important in treating any neurologic disorder.

### First Aid Kit for Cats

"Be prepared" is the cardinal rule in emergency first aid. Having a well stocked, easily accessible first aid kit will enable you to react immediately in an emergency, and may even save your cat's life. A first aid kit should contain:

#### Materials

- gauze bandages (1" and 2")
- gauze pads (2" and 3")
- adhesive tape
- triangular bandage
- cotton swabs and balls
- tweezers
- rectal thermometer
- roll of cotton

#### Medications

- 3% hydrogen peroxide
- milk of magnesia tablets
- activated charcoal tablets
- kaolin mixture
- antibacterial ointments for eyes and skin

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