



Periodontal disease affects the majority of pets by the age of three. Small breed dogs can have bone loss as early as 1 year of age. The disease is caused by the gradual accumulation of bacteria laden calculus and the body's immune response to that infection. The full extent of disease can only be evaluated while under anesthesia through dental radiographs. After the stage of disease is determined, treatment may be recommended and followed by preventative home care. Based on your pets' initial exam, the Doctor has diagnosed your pet as having stage periodontal disease.

Stage I: During this stage of periodontal disease, mild gingivitis, soft plaque and small amounts of hard tartar buildup are noted. Treatment is needed in order to remove plaque for homecare to begin. Gingivitis is characterized by slight inflammation around the gum line and redness. Mild to no radiographic changes will be seen at this point. This stage is reversible with correct treatment and maintenance home care. Annual professional prophylaxis is needed.

Stage II: When diagnosed with this stage, inflammation and infection of the bone have occurred. The infection has progressed to the extent that initial bone loss and supportive tissues have been compromised. The loss of this support will be noted upon periodontal probing. Gingivitis is moderate at this stage but is also reversible. The amount of plaque and calculus has increased both above and below the gum line. Gingival recession to the point of root exposure has not yet occurred. Treatment options include deep scaling, periodontal surgery and bone grafts in addition to 6-12 month annual professional prophylaxis. Home care at this stage is essential in order to deter further destruction.

Stage III: As periodontal disease progresses, bacteria in the calculus has negatively impacted the delicate structures supporting the teeth, so they may become loose and show mobility. Due to the progressive nature of the disease, multiple teeth may require treatment due to loss of attachment. Gingivitis is severe (including spontaneous bleeding) and recession to the point of root exposure is likely. Radiographic changes will be easily noted. Treatment at this stage is necessary to maintain the overall health of your pet and prevent any further progression. Bone grafts and periodontal surgery may be required to "save" teeth, with continued professional periodontal maintenance every 3-6 months. Home care after healing has occurred will be recommended to maintain oral health.

Stage IV: At this final stage of periodontal disease, the destruction of the tooth's supporting structures is extensive. Infection has advanced to the point where severe bone loss and deep pocket formations are accompanied by advanced gingivitis. Gingival disease may have extended to recession and complete root exposure. Radiographs will show significant changes in bone structure and may include subgingival calculus. Once diseased has advanced to this stage, extraction is usually unavoidable and destruction is irreversible. Treatment will improve overall oral health, by extraction of affected teeth. To preserve the remaining teeth a professional periodontal maintenance will be recommended every 3-6 months.