



Dental Disease in Cats

by Arnold Plotnick MS, DVM, ACVIM, ABVP

Dental disease is the most common disease among pets. In fact, the majority of cats aged over five years have some form of dental disease, ranging from mild gingivitis to painful tooth abscesses and resorptive lesions (the feline version of a “cavity”). Dental disorders are painful, and can lead to other illnesses such as liver disease, kidney infections, and heart damage. Unfortunately, dental problems can go unnoticed by pet owners. If a dental problem becomes pronounced, your cat’s ability to eat is hindered and eating may become painful.

Your Primary Concern is for Your Cat’s Health

A number of serious problems can develop that can jeopardize your cat’s health and happiness. Plaque, the bacteria-laden film that coats your cat’s teeth, exudes toxic waste products and enzymes that break down gum tissue. This can lead to periodontal disease – the inflammation of the tissues that surround the teeth. Another common problem is *osteoclastic resorptive lesions*. The surface of the tooth becomes eroded, usually at the junction between the gum and the tooth. They are similar to “cavities” in people, although these erosions are technically not cavities since they’re not caused by bacteria. Initially, these erosions are not painful, however, as they get deeper, the nerve inside the tooth may become affected, causing significant pain. In advanced cases, the cat may stop eating and drinking. Extraction is often necessary.

Endangering Internal Organs

Dental disease in cats is cause for heightened concern due to the potential damage to internal organs that may develop. The kidneys are particularly susceptible. Bacteria and toxins contained in dental tartar can shower the kidneys. This is worrisome, as feline kidneys are subject to a number of age-related changes which can result in impaired kidney function or failure. Additional stress on a cat’s kidneys can be caused by the bacteria and toxins released into the bloodstream resulting from plaque buildup. This can accelerate kidney deterioration and shorten your cat’s lifespan.



Brought to you by ©The Hartz Mountain Corporation



Meet Dr. Plotnick

Founder of Manhattan Cat Specialists

Contrary to the belief that the world is going to the dogs, Dr. Arnold Plotnick has made a career believing in felines. He is the founder of Manhattan Cat Specialists (MCS), a cats-only veterinary facility on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. As a native New Yorker who is board-certified by both the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM) and the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (ABVP), Plotnick is uniquely qualified in this capacity. In fact, he is currently one of only a handful of board-certified cat specialists in the United States.

After earning a master's degree in immunology in 1983 from the University of Florida in Gainesville, Plotnick attended UF's College of Veterinary Medicine the following year. He graduated with honors, finishing fourth in his class and elected into The Society of Phi Zeta, the Honor Society of Veterinary Medicine. He then attended the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine, where he completed a one-year internship in small animal medicine and surgery. "I started to be known as 'The Cat Guy' when I was at Penn," said Plotnick. "My professors and fellow interns could see that I had a kinship with cats and encouraged it. I'm grateful that they did."

Dr. Plotnick became an associate veterinarian at the Cat Hospital at Towson, a high-quality cats-only veterinary hospital in Towson, Maryland, a suburb of Baltimore. However, Plotnick eventually left to pursue a residency in small animal internal medicine at Colorado State University and became board-certified in small animal internal medicine in 1997. In 1999, while he was chief of staff and hospital director of VetSmart Pet Hospital and Health Center in Columbia, Maryland, Plotnick became board-certified in feline medicine.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Dr. Plotnick strongly believed that he wanted to use his special skills to make a significant contribution to the renewal of New York City. He decided to pursue his dream of running his own cat hospital. He left The ASPCA soon after the terrorist attacks and began seeking financing for his venture. In January of 2003, Manhattan Cat Specialists was born.

In addition to his veterinary duties, Plotnick spends much of his time writing. He is the medical editor of *Catnip* magazine, and is a regular contributor to *CatFancy* magazine. He is on the editorial advisory board of the veterinary journal *Veterinary Forum*, and is one of the feline experts on CatChannel.com.



Brought to you by ©The Hartz Mountain Corporation