

# *The truth about Anesthesia Free Dentistry*

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February is National Pet Dental Health Month and at Cedar Grove Veterinary Clinic we like to feature a dental health care topic. This year we will be focusing on anesthesia free dental cleanings. In the past few years more attention has been brought to the idea of anesthesia free dental cleanings.

We understand the appeal of anesthesia free dental cleanings, primarily the lack of anesthesia. While there are always risks associated with anesthesia we take every precaution to minimize the risks, from doing a thorough pre-surgical physical exam prior to the dental cleaning to running pre-surgical bloodwork. If we find anything abnormal that concerns us, we would postpone or cancel the dental



cleaning. We will then work with the client to correct any problems that we find. If the pre-surgical physical exam and bloodwork are all normal and we choose to proceed with the dental cleaning, we will then create an anesthesia protocol that is best for your pet. This anesthetic protocol will include the types and amounts of anesthetics we will use, the amount of fluids they will receive as well as the type of antibiotics they will be given.

During the anesthesia procedure, your pet will have several different vital signs monitored including blood pressure, EKG, heart rate, oxygenation level, respiratory rate and temperature. We combine all of these things to give your pet the safest possible anesthesia experience.

With all the hype surrounding anesthesia free dental cleanings, the question is what exactly is anesthesia free dental cleanings? An anesthesia free dental cleaning is essentially a dental cleaning that is completed with the animal being awake during the entire procedure. This can be an appealing option and may even seem to cost less than a traditional dental cleaning.

There are several different components to consider when comparing an anesthesia free dental cleaning versus a traditional dental cleaning. The main difference is that during anesthesia free dental cleanings your pet is wide awake. The down side of this is that your pet is conscious and will have to be restrained throughout the entire dental cleaning. What this means is that they will forcibly be held down to remain still during the entire procedure. For your pet this can not only be difficult, but painful and scary. Depending on the amount of dental disease present this can become a lengthy time frame for your pet to have to remain still.

Secondly, think of the tooth as an Iceberg; the vast amount of the tooth is hidden by the gums. This means that there can be a fair amount of damage to the tooth structure that can't be seen. When having your pet's teeth cleaned with an anesthesia free dental procedure it is impossible to get below the gum-line of the teeth.

Additionally, dental radiographs which will allow us to identify [periodontal disease](#) at a much earlier stage cannot be done on an awake animal. A traditional dental cleaning will allow for both radiographs to be done and the



teeth to be scaled below the gum line. Also, if there are any teeth that show extensive dental disease or any damage to the tooth they cannot be repaired or removed with anesthesia free dental cleanings.

Third, the process of physically removing the plaque and tartar from the teeth creates microscopic grooves in the teeth. These grooves are the perfect place for bacteria to attach, grow and multiply. During a traditional dental cleaning your pet's teeth will be polished after they are done being scaled. This causes the teeth to be smoother, making it more difficult for the bacteria to attach to them.

Lastly, anesthesia free dental cleanings can cause you to have a false sense of security because the teeth look nice and white but remember that we only see a small amount of each tooth and that the grooves created during the cleaning will allow bacteria to grow back faster. Due to the above mentioned factors your pet would require more frequent cleanings and in the long run you will end up spending more money on the cleanings. Also, if there are any problems noted during the anesthesia free dental cleaning, you will be paying for that cleaning as well as a traditional dental procedure with anesthesia to fix the problems.

With many people, including groomers, offering anesthesia free dental cleanings it can be tempting to say yes when they ask but you can also let them know that you would like to discuss the dental cleaning options available to you and your pets. Your veterinarian will help you to determine which is the best type of cleaning for your pet.

It is also important to remember that preventative measures can help significantly reduce the plaque and tartar build up on teeth as well as prolong the time in between cleanings. The best form of preventative care is [brushing your pet's teeth](#) daily. This can be done using a soft toothbrush and pet safe toothpaste. Another form of preventative care is feeding Science Diet's t/d, which is a food specially designed to help remove plaque. There are also several different dental treat options including Veggidents® and Greenies®. You can also get a water additive that you put in your pet's water daily that minimize the bacteria in the mouth. Utilizing these preventative measures can help save money in the long run and cut down on the overall number of dental cleanings but keep in mind that they will not eliminate the need for dental cleanings.

If you have any questions about anesthesia, traditional dental cleanings, anesthesia free dental cleanings, or any of the preventative care options mentioned please contact Cedar Grove Veterinary Clinic at (920) 668-6212 or email us at [info@cgvet.com](mailto:info@cgvet.com).

