

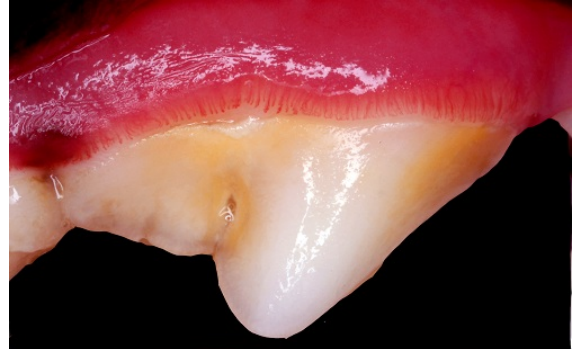
Gingivitis and Stomatitis in Dogs

What are gingivitis and stomatitis?

Gingivitis is a medical term that refers to inflammation of the gums. Gingivitis is the earliest phase of periodontal disease.

"Stomatitis refers to a more generalized inflammation of the mucous membranes within the mouth."

Stomatitis refers to a more generalized inflammation of the mucous membranes within the mouth and may involve the gums, tongue, inner surfaces of the lips, and/or the floor and roof of the mouth.



What causes gingivitis and stomatitis?

Gingivitis is caused by a bacterial infection from plaque biofilm on the teeth and is associated with poor oral hygiene. When bacteria enter into the small pocket between the gums and teeth, known as the *gingival sulcus*, they cause an inflammatory reaction. Left untreated, bacterial infection of the gingival sulcus can progress to tooth support loss (periodontal disease).



Stomatitis may be caused by a hyperimmune (over reaction) response of the gum tissues to bacterial biofilm.



What are the clinical signs of gingivitis and stomatitis?

Gingivitis appears as a thin red line along the margin of the gums and may be accompanied by swollen gum margins, bad breath, plaque and tartar. When the teeth are brushed, the inflamed gums will often bleed.

"Stomatitis is extremely painful."

Stomatitis is a more severe form of inflammation than gingivitis and usually involves the tongue, lips and other soft tissues in and around the mouth as well as the gingiva (gum line). Stomatitis is often very painful causing a decreased appetite due to the pain. Often the dog's haircoat will appear unkempt due to lack of self grooming.



How are these conditions diagnosed?

Diagnosis is primarily based on medical history and clinical signs. Blood and urine tests are often recommended to look for any underlying systemic disease. Oral x-rays are taken to determine if there is any damage to the tooth roots and supporting structures.

How are gingivitis and stomatitis treated?

Removing plaque and tartar under anesthesia is the first step in treatment for gingivitis. The deposits of tartar are removed, and the tooth surfaces are scaled (cleaned) ultrasonically and then polished. It is important to clean the tissues beneath the gum line carefully to remove any accumulated plaque or tartar.



"The specific cause and the severity of the condition will determine your dog's treatment."

The treatment of stomatitis involves treating the underlying cause of the problem which varies from stringent twice-daily plaque control to full mouth extractions. The specific cause and severity of the condition will determine your dog's treatment.





What is the prognosis for gingivitis and stomatitis?

The prognosis for gingivitis is excellent, provided you follow your veterinarian's instructions. Your dog will benefit tremendously from a professional oral assessment, treatment and prevention teeth cleaning under anesthesia, followed by home oral care. The prognosis for stomatitis is good with multiple extractions.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Jan Bellows, DVM, Dipl. AVDC, ABVP

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