



# Veterinary Dental Services, LLC

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## Caries

Caries, or cavities, are acquired defects in the enamel of teeth. Caries is caused by the bacterial degradation of enamel. The bacteria feed on the sugars and carbohydrates that collect on the occlusal surfaces and destroy the enamel. The lesions can be deep enough to expose the pulp canal and therefore, cause dental abscesses.

Many factors contribute to the low incidence of caries in dogs and cats. The shape of their teeth is generally pointed and they have very few flat occlusal surfaces onto which the sugars collect. Most dogs and cats do not eat as many refined carbohydrates (starches and sugars) as people do. And, the pH of the saliva in dogs and cats is less acidic which hinders the growth of the caries-causing bacteria.

Caries is diagnosed by dental Xrays and examination under anesthesia. Treatment may involve a restoration (filling), a root canal, or extraction.