



# Veterinary Dental Services, LLC

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## Stomatitis

### What is stomatitis?

Stomatitis is a severe inflammation of the oral cavity in cats caused by an exaggerated inflammatory response to the plaque bacteria in the mouth. The inflammation causes the gum tissue and oral cavity to become swollen, red, and very painful.

### What causes stomatitis?

The exact cause of stomatitis is unknown though some patients with stomatitis have an underlying virus or bacteria. However, no direct association between stomatitis and any virus has yet been conclusively proven. Feline Leukemia (FeLV), Feline Aids (FIV), Calici, and Herpes are common viruses that can be seen in cats with stomatitis. If your cat has stomatitis and has no record of being tested for FeLV and FIV previously, we may recommend testing, because these viruses are contagious to other cats and can eventually be fatal. Calici and Herpes are also contagious to other cats, but are not life threatening. Since there is no known cure, we rarely test for these viruses.

### What are the symptoms?

Cats with stomatitis are typically very painful. Often they will stop grooming and their coat becomes dull and unkempt. Patients with stomatitis may show interest in food but be reluctant to eat because of the associated pain; they may also cry when yawning or chewing food. Excessive drooling and bad breath are also common symptoms. Frequently, cats with stomatitis are antisocial and hide because of chronic pain.

### Can it be prevented?

Because we do not understand the cause of stomatitis, we cannot prevent it.

### Is this contagious to me or my other pets?

No. Stomatitis itself is not contagious to you or your pet; although if the stomatitis is caused by Bartonella, this disease can be transmitted to you. Bartonella in humans is known as Cat Scratch Fever. If

your cat is positive for Bartonella and you have been scratched or bitten, it is important to contact your physician. FeLV, FIV, Calici, and Herpes viruses can be transmitted to other cats but not humans or dogs.

### **What are the treatment options?**

Because Stomatitis is caused by a response to plaque bacteria in the mouth, a first, conservative step in treating this condition is to remove all plaque and tartar from the patient's mouth. A thorough cleaning under anesthesia can be performed, followed by daily, or twice daily, tooth brushing at home to help prevent the accumulation of plaque. Unfortunately cats with stomatitis are typically very painful and resent tooth brushing, so this can be difficult. Even with meticulous oral hygiene, patients rarely respond to plaque control alone.

The most successful treatment for stomatitis is extraction of all teeth. If there is no surface for the plaque bacteria to attach to, full mouth extractions generally resolve the inflammation. Full mouth extractions should be performed by a veterinarian who is skilled in dentistry and dental radiology. The use of dental xray is essential to ensure that all tooth material has been extracted. If any tooth remnants are left behind they are likely to harbor plaque and calculus and result in ongoing stomatitis.

### **Will my cat be okay with no teeth?**

Yes. Your cat will do remarkably well without teeth. For the first two weeks after surgery you will be instructed to feed your cat canned food or hard food that has been softened with water. After two weeks you can try to offer you cat a very small hard kibble. Cats with no teeth can swallow hard kibble whole, and digest the food well. We recommend that you allow your cat to select between canned food and kibble and feed the preferred food.

### **What if my cat still has inflammation after extractions?**

Full mouth extractions will resolve the stomatitis in 85% of cats. Rarely, despite full extractions, we need to use additional measures. One of the most common medications we use for resistant stomatitis is Cyclosporine. This drug suppresses the immune system and helps prevent the inflammation that causes stomatitis. Cats on cyclosporine need to have periodic blood tests to make sure that the drug is at therapeutic levels. Often the dose can be tapered with time, and in some cats, the cyclosporine can be completely discontinued with no recurrence of stomatitis.