



Veterinary Dental Services, LLC

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What is tooth resorption?

Tooth resorption has been called cervical neck lines, neck lesions, kitty cavities, and Feline Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions (FORLs). This condition is most common in cats over 2 years of age. It results in the loss of tooth structure starting with the outer enamel surface at or below the gumline, and progressing into the dentin and pulp canal. The pulp canal contains blood vessels and nerves which once exposed can cause pain and serve as a route for infection to enter the tooth. These lesions are not cavities or caries, which are virtually never seen in cats

How do I know if my cat has tooth resorption?

Although this condition is painful, cats typically continue to eat. Common symptoms include drooling, vomiting unchewed food, changes in behavior, and bad breath. Some cats will “chatter” if the affected areas are touched, due to the associated pain. If you look into your cat’s mouth you might notice an area of gum tissue starting to grow onto the tooth. This begins as a small pin point area of pink tissue on the tooth and continues to grow over the tooth as the destruction occurs. A yearly oral exam is the best way to determine if your cat has tooth resorption. If we suspect that your cat has this condition, then full mouth radiographs will be recommended.

What Causes tooth resorption?

The exact cause of tooth resorption is unknown. Some studies have shown an association with modern cat diets that are high in magnesium and vitamin D, although others have not found this association. Veterinary dentists and researchers are working hard to understand exactly what causes tooth resorption and to develop methods to prevent this painful condition.

How can I prevent my cat from developing tooth resorption?

Unfortunately, there are no methods proven to prevent tooth resorption. Daily brushing may help you identify tooth resorption early, so it can be treated before causing your cat long-term pain.

How is tooth resorption treated?

Tooth resorption is a progressive disease and extraction is the only consistently successful option to prevent or eliminate the pain. Even if lesions are restored (“filled”) employing the techniques used to treat cavities in humans, the surrounding tooth material continues to be destroyed.

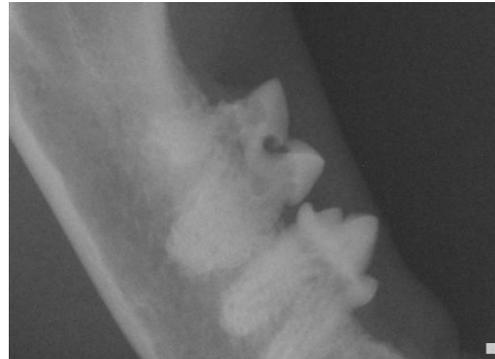
Occasionally, if the lesion is advanced and most of the tooth root(s) have been resorbed, a crown amputation can be performed. This procedure entails removing the crown of the tooth close to the gumline and closing the surrounding tissue over the area.

Extraction of teeth affected by resorption is often difficult because the tooth is fragile and can break easily. These teeth should be extracted by a veterinary dentist, or veterinarian with extensive dentistry experience. It is critical that full mouth xrays be performed on cats with tooth resorption to identify teeth with resorptive lesions and to ensure that all affected teeth have been successfully extracted.

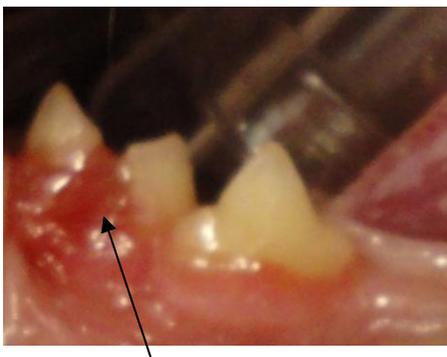
Once a tooth with resorption has been identified in a cat's mouth, it is very common for additional lesions to occur. We recommend rechecks every 6 months for a cat with a history of tooth resorption, including radiographs, to allow us to identify and treat new resorptive lesions.



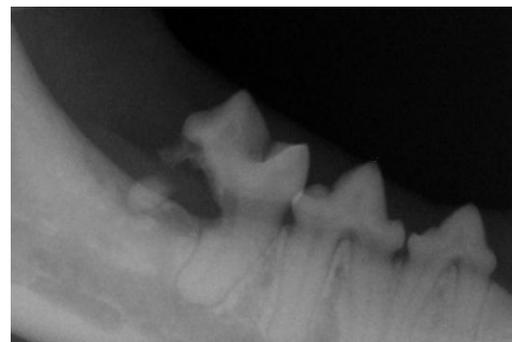
Visible lesion on oral exam



A radiograph of these two teeth revealed tooth resorption, with almost complete resorption of the roots. Although the tooth on the right looks normal on oral exam, the xray reveals advanced resorption of the roots. This is why xrays are so important. Crown amputations were performed on both of these teeth.



Visible lesion on oral exam



A radiograph of this tooth revealed tooth resorption of the crown and root. This tooth was fully extracted.

