



Dr. Mulder is the owner and medical director of the Pet Hospital, located at 403 Fairview Drive in Brantford. While treating the 'whole' patient, his experience in emergency medicine, nutrition and 20 years as a general practitioner, allows him to lead the team as they serve the client, helping to meet all their pets' needs. This advice column is provided to help loving pet owners to make decisions in the care of their pet. If you have a question for Dr. Mulder, please send an email to [drmulder@fairviewpet.ca](mailto:drmulder@fairviewpet.ca) or call the Pet Hospital at 519-753-7257.

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## DR. MULDER TALKS PET CARE TEETHING PROBLEMS

**Q** Dear Dr. Mulder:  
Our puppy has had some bad breath lately, what causes that?

**Dr. Mulder:** Puppy Breath is caused by inflammation of the gums. For kittens and puppies, usually teething is the cause. Teething starts around 16 weeks and is normally finished by 20 weeks. Although babies are notorious for teething issues, very few puppies have issues. Rarely, I've had to give pain medication, but it is very unusual that owners even notice the teething process. Check out our website for a checklist to see if your puppy is experiencing pain.

Adult teeth are supposed to erupt underneath the baby teeth. The leading edge of the adult tooth has special destroyer cells that can eat through almost anything. If the alignment of the teeth is correct, they will erode through the root of the baby tooth and the visible part will simply fall out. When the alignment is off, it can bypass the baby tooth root altogether. If so, the baby tooth will never fall out and infection will come, destroying both it and the adult tooth. Some adult teeth will come in on the inside of the baby teeth, pointing into the hard palate and can actually drill through into the sinuses!

As puppies go through the teething process, they love to chew. For the equivalent of teething rings, choose toys that are soft and squish-able. Avoid hard bones as these can break the teeth. Baby teeth, although VERY sharp, do not have the strength of these adult teeth. They can snap off easily from chewing on hard objects, pulling on pant legs or playing tug of war. Often during an examination I see early signs of damage to the baby fangs as they become dull. If these vulnerable teeth break, they make an open channel for bacteria to get in and can create an abscess that will damage the immature adult tooth. Not to mention the pain of a tooth abscess! I make a plan to extract broken teeth as soon as possible.

Another problem I encounter is crowding of teeth in smaller breeds. Each tooth must have a collar of gum to form a seal around it. When teeth are too close together, two teeth come through one rim of gum tissue leaving a hole between them. This gap can trap food particles and lead to gum infection. When I see a 3-year-old dog with advanced periodontal disease, often they have a compromised area of crowded teeth.

Many of the problems associated with teething can be corrected at the time of the sterilization surgery, sparing your puppy from getting a second anesthetic. At that time we can also x-ray any missing teeth. Occasionally, a problem occurs with the developing adult teeth creating a cyst. Every missing tooth should be checked to ensure there are no problems lurking.

For a video presentation on this topic, see our website [www.fairviewpet.ca](http://www.fairviewpet.ca) under the tab for "Dr. Mulder Talks Pet Care."

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