

Tooth resorptions in cats

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What is tooth resorption?

Tooth resorptions occur commonly in any breed of cat. A tooth resorption occurs where the tooth is slowly destroyed by the body's defence cells. Eventually, a hole develops in the tooth (like decay causing a hole in our teeth). This hole can lead to an increase in sensitivity, pain and discomfort for your cat. Tooth resorptions are diagnosed more often in cats over six years of age, but can also occur in younger cats. They are more common in the back teeth, but the front teeth can also be affected.

Symptoms:

The early stages of tooth resorptions can be painful. If the resorption is causing pain, it can sometimes be severe enough to be similar to a toothache in humans. Your cat may be reluctant to eat because of a sore mouth. Other symptoms can include excess drooling, reluctance to eat dry food or spitting food out, as well as eating only on one side of the mouth. Sometimes the affected cat will stop grooming due to the pain, and their coat will start to look dry and unhealthy. In some instances, cats can chatter their teeth due to the pain from the tooth resorption. The resorption may be hard for you to see if you look in your cat's mouth, especially if it is covered by a layer of tartar. One tell-tale sign of a tooth resorption is gum tissue growing up onto the surface of the affected tooth. If any of the above symptoms are occurring, your cat should be assessed by your veterinarian. There are other ailments that can make your cat go of its food, so your veterinarian will need to check for all possible causes of a reduced appetite.

Diagnosis and treatment:

To diagnose the tooth resorption, your veterinarian will need to have a look in your cat's mouth. This sometimes is better done when your pet is asleep. Dental X-rays are required to help diagnose this condition. The x-ray images will also help the veterinarian decide on the best way to manage the resorption. *Unfortunately, when tooth resorptions are found, complete tooth extraction is the best way to treat the problem to resolve the pain and discomfort.*

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact your primary care veterinary practice, or contact us via email.



Photograph 1: showing marked gum recession and tooth resorptions on upper premolar teeth.



Photograph 2: A cat with tooth resorption. Note discolouration (red) tooth on lower tooth as a result of destruction by the body's defence cells.



Photograph 3: An x-ray image showing tooth resorption.