

# Feline Juvenile Gingivitis



Dental disease in cats is often underdiagnosed, maybe because they are harder to be put in front of a veterinarian! Diseases affecting teeth and gums are believed to be found in older animals. Although this is true for some conditions like tooth resorption or advanced periodontal disease, young cats can also develop teeth and gum disease. There are two distinct periods during which significant oral inflammation can occur in juvenile cats. One of these periods is around the time of kitten vaccinations, where occasional oral inflammation can be observed. It is uncertain whether this inflammation is an immune response to the vaccine components or a result of the eruption of deciduous teeth, leading to increased levels of dental plaque. Generally, this inflammation is temporary and tends to improve with better oral hygiene practices. In cases where there is overgrowth of the gums (a.k.a. gingival enlargement), a gingivectomy may be necessary to resolve the issue (surgical removal of excessive gum tissue).

The second period associated with increased levels of oral inflammation is when the permanent teeth start to emerge. This is a common time for significant gingival inflammation to occur, even in healthy cats. Cats with lesions extending beyond the muco-gingival junction require intensified oral hygiene measures to both alleviate the inflammation and prevent long-term tissue changes such as gingival recession or gingival hyperplasia.

We can therefore classify feline juvenile gingivitis in two distinct presentations.

## Juvenile onset hyperplastic gingivitis

**Juvenile onset hyperplastic gingivitis** is an inflammatory condition that affects the gums of young cats when their teeth start to emerge. The cause of this condition is still unknown, and its frequency hasn't been documented. However, it tends to become less common after approximately two years of age. Cats affected by this condition experience significant gum inflammation, characterized by redness, swelling, and easy bleeding during chewing or oral examination. The gums also enlarge, forming pockets where excessive gum tissue covers the tooth crowns. Interestingly, affected cats don't show signs of pain, and the back part of their mouth (caudal oral mucosa) remains unaffected. Although any cat breed can be affected, there is a genetic predisposition in Siamese, Somali, Maine Coon, Persian, and Abyssinian cats. Treatment typically involves early dental cleaning, consistent daily oral care, and gingivectomy to remove the pockets and reduce inflammation. Some patients may require frequent dental cleanings every three to six months. With appropriate treatment, the symptoms can improve. However, if left untreated, the condition usually progresses rapidly, leading to tooth loss and possibly chronic stomatitis.

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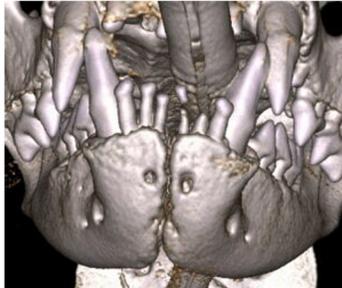
Juvenile onset hyperplastic gingivitis



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CBCT Scan showing bone loss on maxillary incisors



CBCT Scan showing bone loss on maxillary incisors



CBCT Scan showing bone loss of left maxillary and mandibular canines, premolars, and molars



CBCT Scan showing bone loss of left maxillary and mandibular canines, premolars, and molars

## Juvenile onset periodontitis

**Juvenile onset periodontitis** is observed in cats under nine months of age, primarily in Siamese, Maine Coon, and Domestic Shorthaired cats. Affected cats experience rapid accumulation of plaque and calculus, leading to gingivitis, significant early bone loss, formation of periodontal pockets, gum recession, and furcation exposure. The worst affected areas are the mandibular first molar teeth and mandibular incisor teeth, which often become loose. Halitosis (bad breath) is commonly present during tooth eruption. Treating and managing this condition is challenging, and extraction of severely affected teeth is often necessary. Managing the disease requires early dental cleanings starting around nine months of age, followed by regular cleanings every six to nine months. Diligent home oral care is essential to control plaque. Radiographic assessment is valuable for assessing bone loss and diagnosing early tooth resorption, which frequently occurs at sites of periodontal inflammation.

## Cat Dentist in Phoenix

For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact our team at Carefree Dentistry and Oral Surgery for Animals.