

# How can my dog eat with missing teeth?



As veterinary dental specialists, we are often asked “How can my dog eat with missing teeth?” Our typical response is that they will most likely eat better without the diseased and painful teeth. Dogs are known for their sharp teeth and powerful jaws, which they use to tear and chew their food, however, just like humans, some dogs may lose their teeth due to various reasons, such as age, dental disease, injury, or illness. Even with missing teeth, your dog can still enjoy their meals, and they quite frequently live to their genetic potential and with less pain. Fortunately, our furry friends have an amazing ability to adapt to their physical limitations, and they can learn to eat without teeth.

There are several ways that dogs can eat without teeth, and the method may vary depending on the animal’s individual situation. Here are our team’s recommendations for how dogs can eat without teeth:

**Soft or Moist Food:** One of the easiest ways to feed dogs without teeth is to provide them with soft or moist food. This can include canned dog food, homemade meals, or even commercial baby food. These types of foods are easy to chew and swallow, and they provide the necessary nutrients for the dog’s overall health. However, it’s essential to choose high-quality, nutrient-dense food that meets the dog’s specific dietary requirements.

**Soaking Dry Food:** If your dog prefers dry kibble but has trouble chewing it, you can soak the food in warm water or low-sodium broth to make it easier to chew. Soaking dry food can also help improve the pet’s hydration levels, especially if they don’t drink enough water.

**Pureeing Food:** Another way to make food easier to eat is to puree it in a blender or food processor. This is a good option for pets who have trouble chewing but can still swallow food without any difficulty. Pureed food can be made with a variety of ingredients, such as cooked meat, vegetables, and grains. It’s important to ensure that the pureed food is well-balanced and meets the pet’s nutritional needs.

**Handfeeding:** For some dogs, handfeeding may be the only option to ensure they get proper nutrition. This involves feeding the pet small amounts of food at a time, either by hand or with a spoon. Handfeeding can also help strengthen the bond between the pet and their human parent, as it requires close interaction and attention.

**Dry kibble:** Some dogs that are missing strategically important teeth still prefer dry kibble. We have not seen problems with these animals swallowing the kibble whole. It softens in the tummy.

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It's important to note that dogs that eat without teeth may require more frequent meals throughout the day, as they may not be able to eat large amounts of food at once. It's also important to monitor the pet's weight and adjust their diet accordingly to ensure they maintain a healthy weight.

While losing teeth is often necessary, it can be a challenge for dogs, but it doesn't mean they can't enjoy their food and have a wonderful life. With the right diet and care, pets can adapt to eating without teeth and continue to lead a happy and healthy life. It's important to work closely with a veterinarian to ensure the pets' dietary and oral health needs are met, and to provide plenty of love and attention to help them thrive. If your dog has had a recent dental extraction at Carefree Animal Dentistry and Oral Surgery, we are happy to offer recommendations on how your dog can eat with missing teeth. Don't forget that practicing good at-home dental care for your pet, as well as a professional annual dental cleaning is crucial for keeping your dog's teeth and gums clean and healthy!



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