



## My Guinea Pig's Teeth are Broken

Good teeth are essential to your pet's health. A nutritious diet and adequate vitamin C will help them grow strong. In a healthy guinea pig, biting, chewing and grinding of food, especially timothy grass hay, will normally keep the teeth at the proper length.

### Guinea pigs have 20 teeth:

- A pair of upper and lower incisors
- No canines (instead, a gap called the *diastema*)
- A pair of upper and lower premolars
- Three pairs of upper and lower molars

### What if a tooth breaks?

Broken teeth can be the result of chewing the bars of their habitat, or a fall, injury or accident. A poor diet can make teeth weak vulnerable to breakage, especially if the diet is deficient in vitamin C. A guinea pig's teeth are "open rooted" and grow continuously, so teeth should grow back fine on their own and do not require clipping.

Watch to make sure the remaining teeth do not get so long that they touch the gums. If the tooth is broken below the gum line, leaving a hole and causing the gums to bleed, periodically flush the hole and keep it clean with a luke-warm saline solution (1 tsp salt dissolved in 2c of warm water). A curved tip syringe works well for flushing.

### What You Can Do

**Food:** Make absolutely sure your guinea pig is still able to eat. Julienne food into small, thin pieces or try hand feeding your piggy. If your guinea pig isn't able to drink from his water bottle, offer liquids by syringe and adequate vegetables and fruits to insure he gets enough water.

Weigh your guinea pig daily for at least a week. Be ready to hand feed him, if necessary.

Do not arbitrarily clip a guinea pig's remaining teeth too early or too severely as it can make eating on his own very difficult. Over clipping teeth will interfere with the ability to "rip, tear and grasp" food.

**Vitamin C:** Tooth loss can be aggravated by vitamin C deficiency. Ensure that your guinea pig is getting enough vitamin C by providing high C foods like red bell peppers and cilantro. If you're piggy is having a hard time eating fresh food, offer 30 mg sugar free liquid vitamin C once a day for at least a week.

### When To See A Vet

You may wish to contact your Vet if the break is ragged or the opposing teeth begin to curve inward and contact the mouth. Piggie Poo Rescue, and an experienced exotics Vet, can trim a ragged tooth if needed, or if they begin to grow inward. If you suspect another problem, like infection or obvious pain, be sure to see your Vet right away.

### How Fast Will Teeth Grow Back?

Your guinea pig's teeth should start growing back within a few days and should be fully regrown within two weeks.