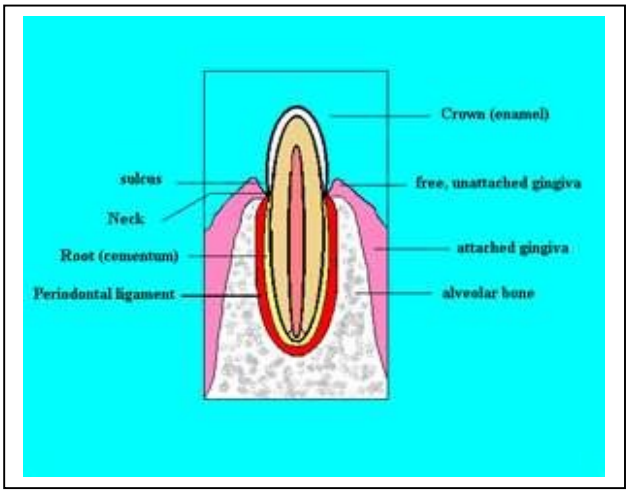
GINGIVAL HYPERPLASIA

The Carolinas Animal Hospital and Dental Clinic

The attached gingiva is the oral mucosa (pink soft tissue) that surrounds the teeth. In most dogs and cats with healthy gingiva, it is pink in color, there is no swelling and the edge of the gingiva sits against the crown of the tooth. The attached gingiva is extremely important to the tooth because there are special cells on the inside of this attached gingiva that release crevicular fluid that keep the tooth healthy and living.



Inflammation of the gingiva is referred to as gingivitis and can be seen in pets (and humans) that don't brush their teeth on a regular basis. When gingivitis is present the gums (attached gingiva) will bleed when they are brushed or in some severe cases, when they are simply touched.

Gingival Hyperplasia is the proliferation (extra growth) of the attached gingiva around a tooth and can be seen on many teeth in the mouth if present. Gingival hyperplasia may be the result of plaque-induced

inflammation (hyperplastic gingivitis) and may also be a side effect of certain drugs used in veterinary medicine such as Cyclosporine (an immunosuppressive drug). Gingival hyperplasia is more common in some breeds of dogs such as Boxers and Springer Spaniels.

Gingival hyperplasia may start out as a small swelling surrounding the tooth or on one side of the tooth. However it may progress to become large growths surrounding the teeth and can be seen on multiple teeth and in all areas of the oral cavity. Areas of gingival hyperplasia cannot be distinguished from other oral masses found in the mouth, thus a biopsy is often times recommended at the time of treatment.

While gingival hyperplasia does not generally cause discomfort or pain in humans, it does create a pseudopocket (or "false" pocket) around the tooth that leads to an increased build up of bacteria and calculus/plaque below the gumline, which leads to advanced periodontal disease. The treatment of choice is to remove the excess gingiva that has grown along the tooth. This excess gingiva can be removed with the patient under general anesthesia using an electrosurgical unit, a CO2 laser,burs on a highspeed handpiece, or using a surgical blade. The removal of the gingival hyperplasia is an art because the surgeon must not disrupt the natural contour of the underlying normal gingiva, otherwise the tooth will not live.