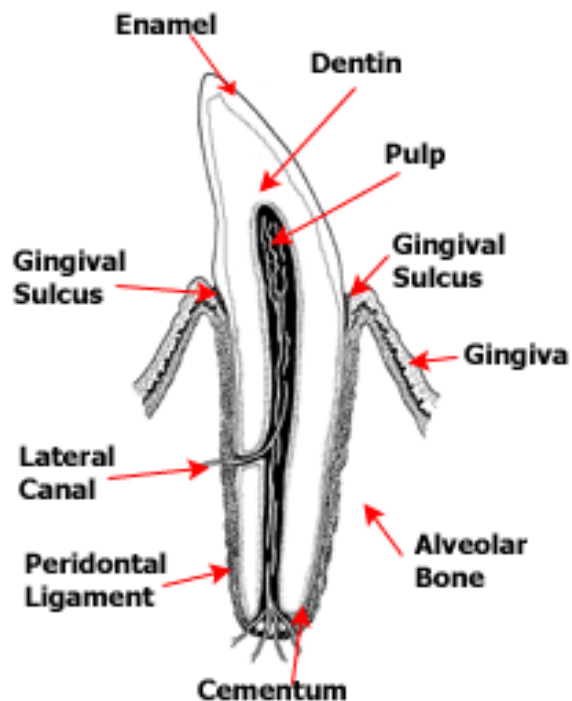


# PULPITIS (DISCOLORED TEETH)



## *The Carolinas Animal Hospital and Dental Clinic*

The center of the tooth is composed of a hollow area called the pulp canal. This canal houses the tooth's blood vessels and nerve supply.



The pulp tissue can be killed or injured, typically from trauma or an abnormal bite leading to trauma. When a tooth is fractured, the pulp or dentin is exposed, and bacteria from the mouth invade the tooth. As a tooth becomes **infected and inflamed**, it is very **painful**. As this condition progresses, the infection moves toward the root of the tooth and causes a painful abscess. The abscessed tooth releases bacteria into the bloodstream and into the critical organs, like the kidneys, liver and heart. Usually, the

only way to detect whether or not the tooth is abscessed is with a dental x-ray. Our pets are unable to communicate how painful this condition is.

Sometimes we are presented with a discolored tooth that is not fractured. **A non-fractured tooth with pulpitis often is pink to begin with, then progresses to a purple then grey color.** As the pulp in a tooth bleeds or becomes inflamed, there is no room for swelling, so its blood supply is compromised and the tooth dies. A dead tooth will eventually abscess, leading to all of the complications previously discussed.



Medical treatment of a discolored tooth is possible, although for only a small percentage of non-fractured, pink colored teeth. **Studies have shown that 94% of discolored teeth are dead or dying.** In the majority of cases, root canal therapy or extraction are indicated in order to remove the source of infection and pain. **Discolored teeth are NOT normal and should NEVER be ignored!** Dental radiographs are essential to determine the cause of the discoloration.