

How do teeth work?

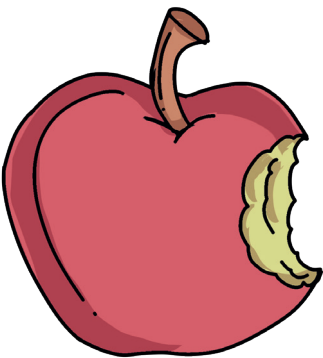
Explanation

Helping us to speak and eat, our teeth are a tiny but very significant part of our bodies. We have four types of teeth, of different lengths and shapes, working together. Read on to learn about their jobs and how to keep your smile healthy!

Growing teeth

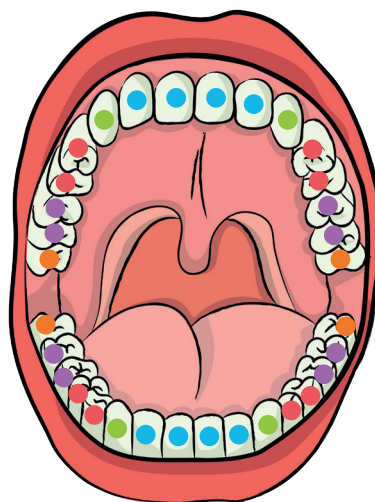
Most of us are born without any teeth at all, although it is possible to have some straight away! In the first few years, the **milk teeth** appear and over time these small teeth become loose and wobbly before they fall out. Milk teeth are then replaced by larger **adult teeth**. An adult has twelve more teeth than a child! Why do you think this is?

A tooth's purpose: biting and chewing!



Imagine eating a juicy, red apple... First, when your eyes spot that delicious fruit in the bowl, your **salivary glands** begin to produce **saliva**. Your mouth is watering with anticipation! Opening wide, you take a crisp, circular bite. The **incisors** at the front cut the rosy skin of the apple. Then, the pointy **canines** next to them sharply tear at the loose chunk of apple so it can tumble into your mouth!

With the apple resting gently on your **tongue**, your **taste buds** send signals to your brain about the sweetness and flavour and you'll want to continue! Now, the **saliva** is helping to begin digestion. As chewing starts, the food is crushed up. This is the job of the **premolars**, breaking it into smaller chunks and the jaw exercises begin! Within seconds, the sides of your mouth and



-  **incisors**
-  **canines**
-  **premolars**
-  **molars**
-  **wisdom (classified as a type of molar)**

tongue push the food towards the back of your mouth. Finally, the wide **molars** work back and forth to grind the apple into smaller and smaller pieces until they are ready to be swallowed, travelling through the **oesophagus** and into the **stomach**.

Not only is food easier to swallow when it is smaller, but it is actually easier for your stomach to digest! This process repeats each time we eat, without us even noticing! Despite being a healthy option, apples contain a lot of natural sugars, so read on to learn how to keep your teeth healthy.

Caring for your teeth

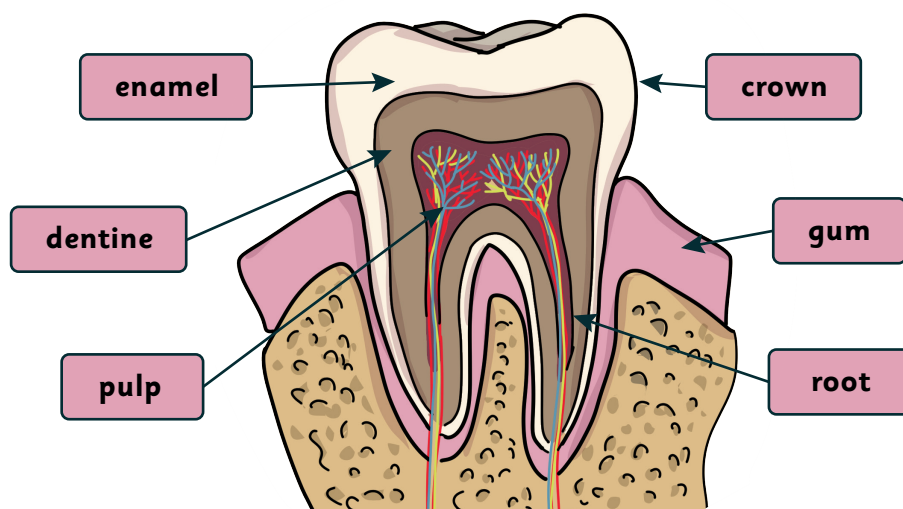
First, it is important to have good oral hygiene for clean, white teeth and pleasant breath.

Using fluoride toothpaste, thoroughly but carefully brush the teeth in all four quadrants of your mouth at the start and end of each day for two minutes. Dentists recommend that you also floss the gaps between each separate tooth so that the day's food and bacteria are completely removed.

Next, avoid foods that are too sugary such as sweets, fizzy drinks and too many fruit juices.

Sugar feeds the bacteria in your mouth which form plaque and produce acid. This naughty acid wears away at the tooth's hard surface and creates holes in the **enamel** called **dental cavities**.

Unfortunately, these might allow bacteria to sneak deeper inside the tooth, leading to more problems.



Finally, remember to visit the dentist every six months so that any problems are caught and fixed early.