

Oral Health Information for the Leader

A healthy mouth is a part of a healthy body. Healthy teeth are crucial to a person's normal physical and emotional well-being.

Why the concern with cavities and other oral disease?

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, affecting at least 95% of all adults in the United States. Cavities, or caries, are considered an infectious disease of the mouth. The cost of treating cavities and gum infections totals millions of dollars in the U.S. and represents an immense loss of time and productivity.

Diseases of the mouth may not seem to be as serious as cancer, polio or a heart attack, but oral disease is a health hazard. A cavity can lead to intense pain, complicated infection, emergency surgery and in rare instances, even death.

Studies suggest that expectant mothers who have poor oral health are more likely to experience early labor and deliver low-birthweight infants. Oral health, therefore, can impact a child's health for a lifetime.

Delayed speech, chewing difficulties, inadequate nutrition, low self-esteem and embarrassment can also be caused by poor oral health. Valuable energy and money are spent in seeking help for this preventable disease.

How a Tooth is Built

Many people do not realize that a tooth is a live part of the body. When studying teeth, consider the following:

Enamel*

- covers the tooth's crown (the portion visible in the mouth)
- thickest on the chewing surfaces (no thicker than a dime here)
- hardest substance in the body

Dentin

- Under enamel
- soft

Pulp

- Within dentin
- Full of nerves and blood supply

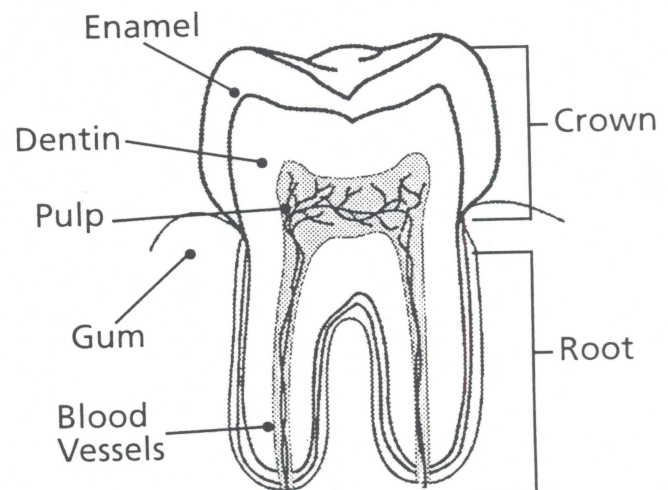
Gums

- Surround the teeth and attach teeth to the jaw bone
- Full of nerves and blood supply network

Blood vessels (capillaries)

- In teeth and gums
- Provides nutrients to teeth and gums
- Can spread infections that occur in mouth and teeth to the rest of body

The crown is the part of the tooth normally visible outside the gum; the root is the part below the gum that holds the tooth in place.



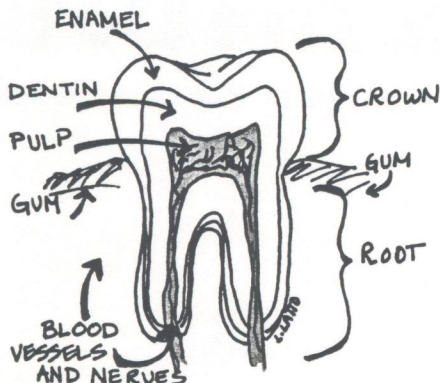
Thorough chewing is the first step of digestion. A tooth's shape shows its work:

- Sharp edges of incisors (front) cut food into small pieces.
- Pointed cuspids or canines (corners) continue to tear food apart.
- Bicuspids (sides), more pointed than incisors but more rounded than canines, tear and mash.
- Blunt molars (back) crush and grind the food further.

*Underlined are vocabulary listed in session outlines.

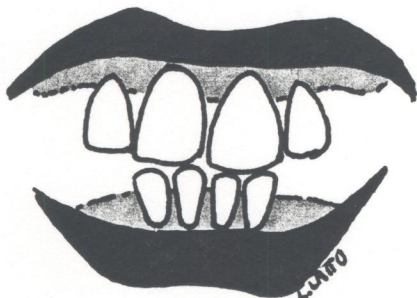
Read and Color...

How a Tooth Is Built

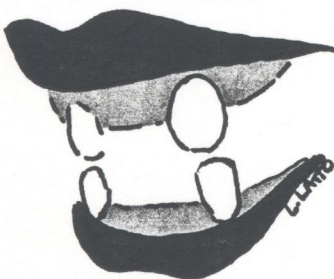
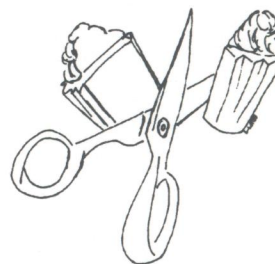


The **GUMS** surround the teeth and attach teeth to the jaw bone. The **CROWN** is the part of the tooth that is normally visible outside the gum. The **ROOT** is the part below the gum that holds the tooth in place. Teeth are covered with a layer of **ENAMEL**. This is what you see when you look in your mouth.

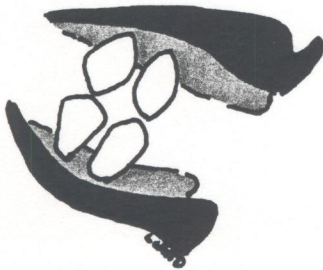
Enamel is the hardest substance in your body. Below the enamel is **DENTIN**, a very soft substance. Blood vessels and nerves are inside the tooth, in the **PULP**. This is why a "toothache" aches!



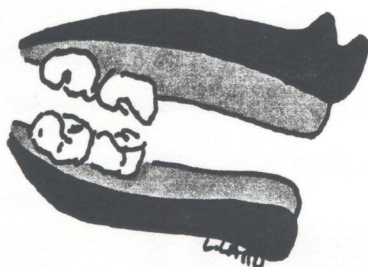
INCISORS are the front teeth. They work like scissors to bite into food.



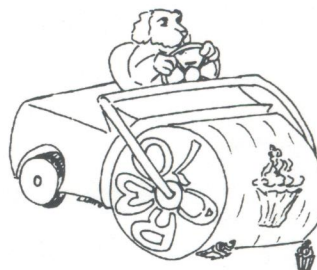
CANINES are located on the corners of the mouth. You tear food with these teeth.



BICUSPIDS are on the sides of the mouth. They are more pointed than incisors and more rounded than canines and help to tear food.



MOLARS are way in the back of the mouth. These are the food grinders





Tooth Basic Anatomy

