

Facts About Teeth Background Information for Educators

Parts of a Tooth

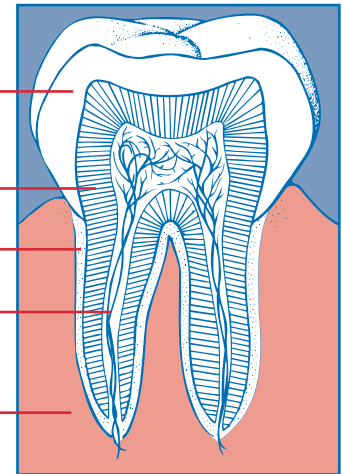
Enamel: Exceptionally hard outer layer that covers the crown, the section of tooth above the gumline.

Dentin: Hard tissue that forms the body of the tooth.

Cementum: Bone-like tissue that covers the root.

Pulp: "Living Core" in the center of the tooth, contains nerves and blood vessels.

Gum Tissue: Soft tissue which covers and protects roots of teeth and surrounding bone.



Primary ("Baby") Teeth

Begin to form before birth.

Start to erupt through the gums around 6 to 7 months. Most children have 20 primary teeth by age 3.

Important for chewing, speech, appearance, and as spacers for permanent teeth.

At 6 to 7 years, the first primary tooth roots begin to dissolve; then teeth loosen and fall out to make room for permanent teeth.

Back teeth serve as foundation for jaw development; remain for 9 to 12 years.

Some children are frightened when they begin to lose their primary teeth. They can be reassured that losing their "baby teeth" is a natural part of growing up, and that new, permanent teeth will quickly replace the teeth they lose.

Permanent Teeth

Most people eventually have 32 permanent teeth, including wisdom teeth.



8 Incisors – "front teeth," like chisels, to cut food



4 Cuspids – next to Incisors, pointed to tear food



8 Bicuspids – between Cuspids and Molars, like nutcrackers, to crush food



12 Molars – rear of mouth, like mortars and pestles, to grind food

Plaque and Decay

Plaque — A nearly colorless film on teeth, contains acid-producing bacteria that cause decay.

- Each time we eat foods with sugar or starch, these bacteria produce acids that attack tooth enamel for at least 20 minutes.

Decay — After repeated attacks, a hole (or cavity) can form through dissolved enamel. You can help prevent decay and cavities through:

- Daily brushing, flossing and rinsing
- Healthy eating
- Regular dental checkups



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