



Dental Health

When you get your picture taken, everyone says, "Say cheese! Smile!" So you do — you open your mouth and show your teeth. When you see the picture, you see a happy person looking back at you. The healthier those teeth are, the happier you look. Why is that?

It's because your teeth are important in many ways. If you take care of them, they'll help take care of you. Strong, healthy teeth help you chew the right foods to help you grow. They help you speak clearly. And yes, they help you look your best.



Why Healthy Teeth Are Important

How does taking care of your teeth help with all those things? Taking care of your teeth helps prevent **plaque**, which is a clear film of **bacteria**) that sticks to your teeth.

After you eat, bacteria go crazy over the sugar on your teeth, like ants at a picnic. The bacteria break it down into acids that eat away tooth enamel, causing holes called cavities. Plaque also causes **gingivitis**, which is gum disease that can make your gums red, swollen, and sore. Your gums are those soft pink tissues in your mouth that hold your teeth in place.

If you don't take care of your teeth, cavities and unhealthy gums will make your mouth very, very sore. Eating meals will be difficult. And you won't feel like smiling so much.

How You Can Keep Your Teeth Healthy

- **Brush at least twice a day** — after breakfast and before bedtime. If you can, brush after lunch or after sweet snacks. Brushing properly breaks down plaque.
- **Brush all of your teeth**, not just the front ones. Spend some time on the teeth along the sides and in the back. Have your dentist show you the best way to brush to get your teeth clean without damaging your gums.

- **Take your time while brushing.** Spend at least 2 or 3 minutes each time you brush. If you have trouble keeping track of the time, use a timer or play a recording of a song you like to help pass the time.
- **Be sure your toothbrush has soft bristles** (the package will tell you if they're soft). Ask your parent to help you get a new toothbrush every 3 months. Some toothbrushes come with bristles that change colour when it's time to change them.
- **Learn how to floss your teeth**, which is a very important way to keep them healthy. It feels weird the first few times you do it, but pretty soon you'll be a pro. Slip the dental floss between each tooth and along the gumline gently once a day. The floss gets rid of food that's hidden where your toothbrush can't get it, no matter how well you brush.
- You can also brush your tongue to help keep your breath fresh!



Activities for you to do!

Activity 1

Can you match the word to the meaning:

Enamel	ways to keep teeth clean
Plaque	tiny holes in the tooth caused by a build-up of plaque
Cavity	hard, outer layer of the tooth
Oral hygiene	soft, sticky film that builds up on teeth and contains bacteria

Activity 2

Dental Dilemmas!

Come up with solutions for the character using the following questions:

1. **What actions** might affect the character's dental health?
2. **What information** might help the character in the situation?
3. **Who can help** them with the dilemma?

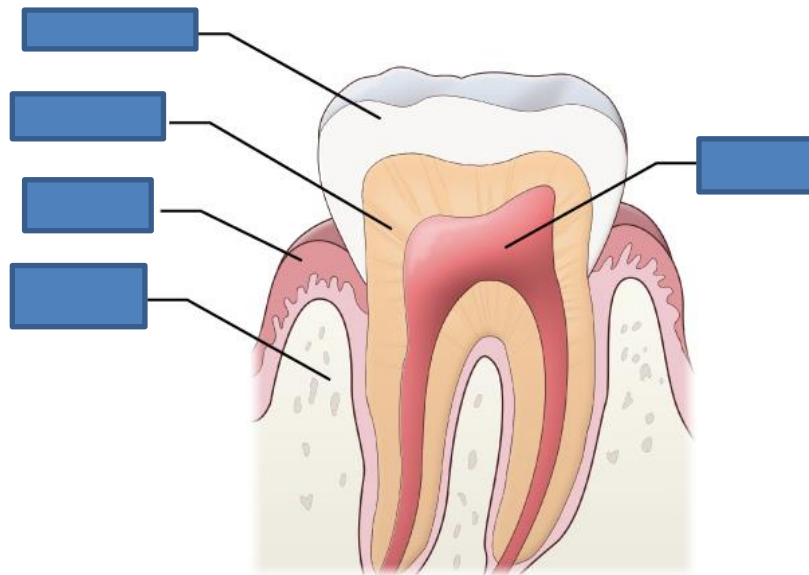
Dental Dilemma 1

Sam brushes his teeth twice a day and drinks lots of water. Sam also loves sweets and buys them in the shop every day after school. Recently, Sam has been having pain in the side of his mouth and now the gum is swollen too. Sam hasn't told anyone because he is worried about getting into trouble with the dentist for eating sweets.

Dental Dilemma 2

Leah has a 6 year old younger sister. She has begun to brush her teeth by herself before bed, but Leah has noticed that often she doesn't do it, or only for a few seconds. When Leah asks her sister why she isn't brushing, she says that she keeps forgetting and that she doesn't like the taste of the toothpaste.

Activity 3



In your home learning book draw a picture of a tooth and name the parts.