



Teeth

The mouth and teeth are the first part of the digestive system. Teeth break the chunks of food we put into our mouths into smaller pieces. These are easier to swallow. Humans have two sets of teeth across their lifetime. Baby teeth come first and when these fall out, we grow adult teeth. Adult teeth have to last the rest of our lives. There are four types of teeth in the adult mouth. Each one plays a different role in chewing our food.

INCISORS

Adult humans have eight incisors. They are at the front of the mouth. There are four at the top and four at the bottom. These teeth are used for cutting food. They have straight, sharp edges to help with this job.

CANINES

Either side of the incisors are the four canine teeth. These pointed teeth help tear food such as meat. Plant-eating animals such as cows do not have canines. Carnivores such as cats and dogs have large and obvious canine teeth. They use them to rip apart their prey.

PREMOLARS

Humans have eight premolars. They are behind the canines. These teeth are wider and flatter than the incisors and canines. They have ridges, or 'cusps', on them. These help them to grind food. Then they move food further back towards the molars.

MOLARS

The largest teeth in the mouth, molars, are flat like premolars and have four cusps for grinding and crushing food. Humans have up to twelve molars. There are three on either side of the upper and lower jaw. The very back four are called wisdom teeth and they are the last to develop. They emerge between the ages of about 18-25.

CARING FOR TEETH

Once you have your adult teeth, it is really important to care for them. Good dental care helps keep teeth strong and healthy. You should brush your teeth twice a day. Make



sure to brush right to the back of your mouth so that all of your teeth are cleaned. Molars and premolars need special attention because food can get stuck in the grooves in between. If trapped food is not removed, bacteria can grow and damage teeth. Certain foods can also damage your teeth. Sugar is the main culprit. Sugar helps bacteria to grow. Therefore, too much sugar can cause teeth to decay. This results in acids which damage the surface on your teeth. Your teeth have a hard coating called enamel. It protects the teeth from damage or from hot and cold. That is why sensitive teeth can sometimes be a sign that the enamel is starting to wear away. Regular visits to the dentist are important in looking after your teeth. Dentists can spot and treat any problems before they get too serious.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Complete the table with facts about the four types of teeth:

Name	Number	Description	Job
Incisors			Cutting food
	4	Pointed	
			Transport food to the back of the mouth.
Molars			

2. Which animals don't need canines?

3. What is the name of the hard, protective coating of teeth?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

What does emerge mean?

V

What is meant by describing sugar as the *main culprit* for damage to teeth?

S

Summarise the ways the text advises us to care for our teeth.

I

Why are the tips about caring for your teeth especially relevant for when you get your adult teeth?

E

What is the overall purpose of this text? Tick one.

To entertain someone

To compare human teeth with other animals

To give general information about teeth

To help someone who is thinking of becoming a dentist