

Teeth

The mouth and teeth are the first part of the digestive system. The job of the teeth is to break the large chunks of food into smaller parts so that they can be swallowed. Humans have two sets of teeth across their lifetime: baby teeth come first and are later replaced by adult teeth which have to last the rest of our lives. There are four types of teeth in the adult mouth and each one plays a different role in chewing our food.

Incisors

Adult humans have eight incisors. They are positioned at the front of the mouth, 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, on the top and bottom jaw, we have four canine teeth. These pointed teeth help tear food such as meat. Plant-eating animals such as cows do not have canines whilst carnivores such as cats and dogs have prominent canine teeth that they use to rip apart their prey.

Premolars

Further back in the mouth, humans have eight premolars. These teeth are wider and flatter than the incisors and canines and have ridges, or 'cusps' on them. These help them to grind food and transport it from the front of the mouth to the back where the molars do the main grinding and crushing.

Molars

The largest teeth in the mouth, molars are flat like premolars and have four cusps for grinding. Humans have up to twelve molars, three each 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 so that they stay



strong and healthy. You should brush your teeth twice a day, making sure you reach all of your teeth. Because of their ridges, 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. Too much sugar, especially sugary drinks, can cause teeth to decay. That is because it encourages more bacteria to grow and results in acids which harm the enamel on your teeth. This enamel is the hard coating that 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 and picking up on any potential issues before they get too serious.

RETRIEVAL 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 Which word in the section on canines is closest in meaning to noticeable or obvious?

V What does emerge mean?

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