

Taking care of your mouth and teeth

LEARNING OUTCOMES



- To understand why teeth are important and the importance of looking after them
- To understand factors which can harm our teeth and mouth health
- To be able to recognise mouth diseases
- To understand how to keep our teeth and mouth healthy
- To know how to brush our teeth properly

RESOURCES

- Sticky notes
- Magazines, paper, scissors, glue
- Flip chart and pens
- Copies of Resources 2–13
- Cards for matching made from Resource 1
- Cards for matching made from Resource 5b

RELATED TOPICS

- Children's teeth (Theme 6, Topic 2)
- Visiting the dentist (Theme 6, Topic 3)
- Healthy food and drink (Theme 1)
- Stopping Smoking (Theme 3 Topic 1)
- Alcohol (Theme 4 Topic 1)
- GP and local primary care services (Theme 10)

HEALTH SKILLS

Oral health is important for general health and wellbeing. Poor oral health can affect someone's ability to eat, speak, smile and socialise normally, for example, due to pain or social embarrassment.

Understanding the importance of our oral health to our wider health and wellbeing helps make the case for looking after our teeth and mouth. Knowing how to look after our teeth and prevent mouth disease is therefore a key part of promoting our health and wellbeing more generally.

Related health information

NHS website: www.nhs.uk
Colgate 'Bright Smiles Bright Futures'

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Understanding why the teeth and mouth are so important can help to provide learners with the motivation to look after them properly. In order to know how to take care of their teeth and mouth, and promote their own good oral health, learners need to know:

- What sorts of things can damage their teeth and mouth and what diseases these can cause;
- What sort of things they can do to help keep their teeth and mouth healthy.

Functional Skills/Core Curriculum

Activities in this topic will contribute to learning in the following curriculum area:

- locate information from written text
English L1.14 (L_{Rt}/L1.5)
- understand specialist key words
English E3.8 (L_{Rw}/E3.1)
- listen for and identify relevant information and new information from discussions, explanations and presentations **English** E3.1 (L_{SLr}/E3.3)
English L1.1 (L_{SLr}/L1.1)
- use strategies to clarify and confirm understanding **English** E3.3 (E_{Lr}/E3.4a)
- write tips for a healthy mouth, and how to take care of your mouth
English L1.23 (L_{Wt}/L1.2)

- Ask the group to suggest what we mean by 'dental' or 'oral health' and write up some key ideas. Make sure the ideas listed include aspects of health of the whole mouth and not just the teeth.
- Ask the learners how they feel about their own teeth.
- Have magazines available and get the learners to cut out pictures of people who have good looking teeth and make a collage. Discuss whether these are 'real' teeth and the expectations that this kind of picture sets. Are they realistic?
- Ask learners in pairs to discuss their own experiences of their dental health and how they feel about it.
- Ask the learners to suggest things that think might have helped keep their own teeth and mouth healthy and things which they think might have caused damage.
- Ask the learners to share their thoughts about how they brush their teeth. What sort of toothbrush do they use? Do they know how to do it properly? How do they know this? Where did that information come from? Who told/showed them? Do they use any tricks, aids, songs etc to help?
- Split the learners into pairs. Give them a set of cards and numbers made up from Resource 1. Ask them to match the 10 statements with the correct numbers. Go through the answers as whole group.

ACTIVITY 1

Think about teeth and why they are so important

- Tell the learners we're going to find out how much they really know about teeth! Hand out copies of the teeth quizzes on Resource 2a, 2b and 2c and ask the learners to fill it in, individually, in pairs or in small groups.
- Come back together as a whole group to discuss the answers.
- Ask the learners to discuss in pairs why we need teeth.
- Give out Resource 3 and go through the suggestions, discussing each one in turn to bring out the importance of teeth.

Support

- The quiz is in three parts. Everyone should manage the questions in the first part but this could be done in pairs if reading levels or confidence is low. The cloze text could be done in small groups, with a more confident reader in each group or all together as a whole group. The matching exercise could also be done as a whole group together.

ESOL

Before learners try the quiz, check if there are any unfamiliar words that may prevent them from completing it. There is some vocabulary specific to teeth included which learners may need help reading/pronouncing e.g. milk teeth, enamel, dentine, pulp, cementum, incisor, canine, premolar, molar.

ACTIVITY 2

Understand what sorts of things can damage our teeth and mouth

- Ask the learners to discuss, in pairs what sort of things they think might damage their teeth and mouth. Write each thing on a sticky note and stick on the flip chart.
- As a whole group, go through each sticky note and discuss why each of those things causes damage to the teeth and mouth. Make sure the answers, noted on the flip chart, include: irregular brushing, too many sugary drinks and snacks (sugar reacts with bacteria in plaque, producing harmful acid), too many acidic foods, poor diet in general, opening things with your teeth, contact sports with no mouth guard, hard bristled brushes, brushing too hard, children going to bed with juice/formula/milk, tongue/lip piercings, alcohol, smoking.
- Discuss the two case study scenarios on Resource 4 talking about why the people had problems with their teeth and mouth, and how their actions may also have affected their wider health and wellbeing too (diet, obesity, mental health).
- Encourage the learners in small groups (each group takes one area) to create a case study with a name, like in Resource 4, telling the story of how the following have been bad for the teeth and mouth health of that person, and what the associated dangers were: smoking, alcohol, mouth piercings.
- All together as a whole group, add to each case study what advice the learners would give the person.

Support

- If literacy confidence is low, instead of using sticky notes learners could draw pictures or give the answers verbally and written up onto the flip chart.
- Encourage learners to explain in their own words what each thing really means to check understanding e.g. irregular brushing 'what do we mean by irregular?', giving examples of what we mean by sugary drinks, what are acidic foods? What is a poor diet? What do we mean by contact sports? Etc.

ESOL

Identify and discuss the meaning of unfamiliar words as you go through the discussion.

ACTIVITY 3

Know about mouth diseases

- Ask the learners if they know the names of any diseases and/or conditions you might get in your mouth and list them on the flip chart.
- Give out Resource 5a. Firstly, make sure that all the learners can pronounce the names of the different diseases.
- Give out Resource 5b (cut into cards) and ask the learners to read the information and match each description to the correct disease.
- Go through the answers together and discuss the different aspects of each disease. Ask if they know what causes each disease and how it is treated.
- Make sure that the learners understand that they need to visit their dentist if ever they think they may have one of these diseases.

Support

- Briefly explain what each of the diseases on Resource 5a are, before giving out cards from 5b, so that they sound familiar when they read them.
- Let learners choose which diseases they want to discuss, rather than doing them all.
- Pair/group the learners so there is a more confident reader in each pair/group.
- Go through the cards from 5b before starting the activity and ask the learners to point to any words they don't recognise, so you can explain them.

ESOL

- Pair/group the ESOL learners with more confident English speakers who may be able to help with vocabulary.
- Do the activity as a whole group together, discussing vocabulary in detail as you go through the activity.

ACTIVITY 4

Know how to keep your mouth healthy

- Give out Resource 6 and ask the learners to complete the quiz. Go through the answers together as a whole group.
- Through the discussion, bring out the main points for how to keep your mouth and teeth healthy: eating a healthy balanced diet with limited sugary drinks and snacks, brushing for two minutes twice a day, chew sugar free gum after meals, snack less and have regular meals more, try to limit sugary foods to mealtimes, don't drink or eat anything but water after nighttime brushing, stop smoking, keep alcohol intake within recommended limits, visit the dentist regularly, don't send children to bed with drinks of milk/formula/juice.
- Give out Resource 7. Ask the learners to create their own factsheet by filling in the speech bubbles.

Support

- Learners could do the quiz pairs or small groups to help with confidence levels. It could also be done in teams, with the questions being read out.
- Make sure the learners know that they don't have to fill out all the speech bubbles on Resource 7.

ESOL

- Before learners try the quiz, check if there are any unfamiliar words that may prevent them from completing it.
- Make sure all the points are well explained and get the learners to say them in their own words.

ACTIVITY 5

Know how to clean your teeth

- Cleaning your teeth is one of the main ways you can keep your mouth healthy, but do you know how to do it properly? Ask the learners to describe how they brush their teeth. Where did they get their information from about how to do it properly?
- Give out copies of Resource 8. Talk through the questions and discuss answers.
- Show Resource 9 to reinforce how to brush teeth properly and talk through.

Support

- Start off by getting the learners to talk about their teeth-brushing in pairs before sharing with the whole group.
- Make sure that the key words are written up on the flip chart for reference.

ESOL

- If the learners are finding it hard to describe how they brush their teeth, they could demonstrate using toothbrushes (a pack of toothbrushes could be brought in for this purpose). Otherwise they could point to areas in their mouth where they clean.
- You could prepare cards with relevant vocabulary on such as; inside, outside, behind, front, back, and explain these words to the learners. This may help them with their descriptions.

Action

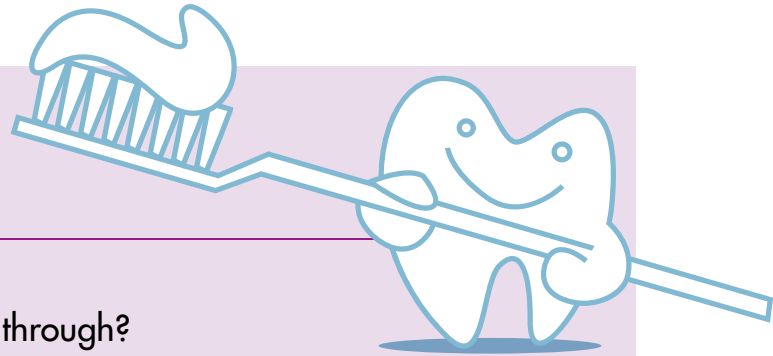
- Encourage the learners to fill in the chart on Resource 10, noting down things which harm teeth and mouth health, and why/how.
- Make a poster warning people about the things they might do which could damage their teeth and mouth health.
- Use Resource 11 to reinforce and summarise learning from the whole topic.
- Find out more about the causes and treatments of mouth diseases and conditions and record on Resource 12.
- Encourage learners to find out further information about dental health and toothbrushing from sources such as NHS website and the dental surgery.
- Encourage learners to do the Oral Health Quiz on Resource 13 to summarise their learning from the whole topic.

Taking care of your mouth and teeth

RESOURCE 1

Average number of teeth for a two year old	8
Number of minutes you need to brush your teeth for	2
Number of canine teeth in an adult mouth	4
Number of primary (milk) teeth in a child's mouth	20
Age up to which everyone gets free dental care	18
Number of permanent teeth	32
Number of UK children per primary school class with tooth decay	9
Number of surfaces on each tooth	5
Number of months you should change your toothbrush after	3
Number of minutes it takes the mouth to get rid of harmful acid caused by sugary foods and drink	60

TEETH QUIZ: How much do you know?



1 What are milk teeth?

2 When do babies' teeth start coming through?

3 How many milk teeth will a child have in a full set?

4 By what age should all the milk teeth have come through?

5 When do milk teeth start to fall out?

6 By what age have all the milk teeth usually fallen out?

7 How many teeth in a full adult set?

8 What are the last four teeth to come through called?



What are *teeth made of?*

Fill in the gaps using the words below in the box. Cross each word out when you have used it.

alive bad blood cold crown enamel gum hardest
healthy hot jawbone messages nerve part pulp root tooth

The part of the tooth that you can see above the gum is called the _____. This is covered in hard, shiny _____. Enamel is the _____ substance in the body and protects the more sensitive inner parts of the tooth.

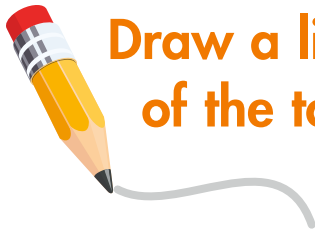
Underneath this is the dentine – a sensitive substance that makes up most of the _____. Dentine is a hard substance, though not quite as hard as enamel.

Dentine protects the inner _____ of the tooth, called the _____. The pulp is where each tooth's _____ supply and _____ endings are found. The blood supply is what keeps the teeth _____ and _____. The nerve endings send _____ to the brain, such as whether you're eating something _____ or _____, or if you have a _____ or damaged tooth.

The pulp goes all the way into the _____ of the tooth, which is hidden under your _____. Cementum covers the root of the tooth, and fibres connect the tooth to the _____.

Types of teeth

There are four different types of teeth.



Draw a line from the name of the tooth to its description.

Incisors
Canine teeth
Premolars
Molars

These are sharp, pointy teeth. You have one on each side of your incisors on your top and bottom jaw, making a total of four. They help to tear food.

Next to your canine teeth are your premolars. You have eight premolars in total: four on your top jaw and four on the bottom. They are bigger and wider than your incisors and canine teeth and are used for crushing and grinding food.

You have eight of these: four on top and four on the bottom. These are your strongest teeth and work with your tongue to help you swallow food, mashing it up until it's ready to be swallowed safely.

These are your four front teeth on the top and bottom jaw. They're used for cutting and chopping food.

Why are our teeth so important? We need our teeth to...



***And having good, healthy teeth
can help with our self-confidence.***

Taking care of your mouth and teeth

RESOURCE 4



Afua started having problems with her teeth because she was having too many sugary foods and drinks. The sugar was reacting with the bacteria found in her mouth and turned into acid. The acid attacked her tooth enamel (which protects the inside of the tooth) and it started to wear away. This left her teeth looking yellow and feeling very painful and sensitive.

What did the dentist tell Afua?

- ◆ Have sugary food and drinks just at mealtimes;
- ◆ Only drink fruit juice at mealtimes and not in between meals;
- ◆ Avoid fizzy drinks and instead drink still water, milk and unsweetened tea;
- ◆ If you have a fizzy drink use a straw, as this helps the drink to go to the back of your mouth and reduces the number of acid attacks on your teeth;
- ◆ It is better to have three or four meals a day rather than lots of snacks;
- ◆ If you are going to snack, avoid sugary snacks and instead try plain popcorn, nuts, cheese, breadsticks, plain yogurt, rice cakes, unsweetened cereal, plain bagels, fresh soup, raw vegetable pieces, fresh fruit;
- ◆ Chew sugar-free gum after eating to help make more saliva and cancel out the acids which form in your mouth after eating;
- ◆ Every time you eat or drink anything sugary, your teeth are under acid attack for up to one hour so wait for at least one hour after eating or drinking anything acidic before you brush your teeth.



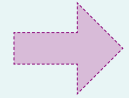
Ryan never really bothered with looking after his teeth. They started to look very stained and people at college started saying he had bad breath. One of his teeth recently fell out so he now has a gap. He feels self-conscious and has lost his confidence because of this. He finds it very hard to make friends at college and never goes out. He doesn't feel like he is living his life to the full.

What did the dentist tell Ryan?

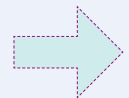
- ◆ Brush your teeth last thing at night and at least one other time during the day. Use a toothbrush with a small- to medium-sized brush head with soft to medium bristles, and brush for two minutes.
- ◆ Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste that contains 1350ppm to 1500ppm fluoride
- ◆ Visit your dental team at least once a year, or as often as they recommend.
- ◆ Clean in between your teeth with 'interdental' brushes or floss at least once a day, to help remove plaque and food from between your teeth.
- ◆ Use a mouthwash to freshen your breath and kill bacteria.

Mouth diseases and conditions

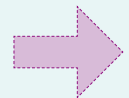
Acid



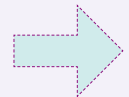
Plaque



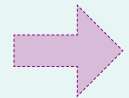
Gum disease



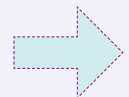
Gingivitis



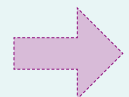
Periodontal disease



Mouth cancer



Bad breath (Halitosis)



Taking care of your mouth and teeth

RESOURCE 5B

This attacks teeth and wears down the hard enamel on the outside which protects them. This makes teeth weak and can cause holes in teeth (cavities) and/or make your teeth sensitive

This is a film of germs (bacteria) that forms on the teeth every day and which attacks teeth. It needs to be removed by brushing

The gums will be swollen, sore or infected. Smoking increases the risk of this as it limits the blood flow to the gums. It is caused by plaque. It can lead to gumboils if not treated

This is when the gums become swollen (inflamed) and can feel sore and may bleed when brushing

This is when you have gingivitis for a long time. The bones which hold your teeth in places wears away and this causes your teeth to become loose and they may fall out. It cannot be cured but it can be managed successfully

People who drink too much and smoke are 30 times more likely to develop this disease because alcohol helps the mouth to (take in) the tobacco. Look for changes in your mouth – sore patches or ulcers that don't heal after 3 weeks may be a sign of this

The most common cause of this is not keeping your mouth and teeth clean. Bacteria which builds up on your teeth, tongue and gums can produce foul smelling gases. Eating strong flavoured foods, smoking, crash dieting and some medications can cause this

What do you know about ... **How to keep your mouth healthy?**



True or False?

- 1.** Drink fruit juice slowly to protect your teeth
- 2.** Eating a breadstick or some cheese after eating fruit will help get rid of harmful acid
- 3.** Only eat and drink items containing sugar as snacks rather than as part of a meal
- 4.** A healthy mouth means no sugary foods or drinks
- 5.** Electric toothbrushes are more effective than manual ones
- 6.** Whitening toothpastes lighten your teeth
- 7.** Having a healthy mouth and gums can help improve your general health

Top tips for healthy teeth and mouth



How to brush your teeth





BE A TOOTH DEFENDER!

Know How To Brush

1. OUTSIDE TEETH

Make sure you brush each tooth surface all the way to the gum line.



2. INSIDE TEETH

Brush inside of each tooth the same way as in Step 1.



3. BITING SURFACES

Brush biting surface of each tooth.



4. BEHIND FRONT TEETH

Use tip of toothbrush to brush behind each front tooth, both top and bottom.



Tooth Defender Tips

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, always before bedtime and on one other occasion
- Just spit after toothbrushing, rinsing washes the fluoride protection away
- Remember to brush *all* of your top and bottom teeth



Taking care of your mouth and teeth

RESOURCE 10

Things which can harm our teeth and mouth	How/why they harm our teeth and mouth
Not brushing our teeth regularly	Brushing teeth stops plaque building up. Plaque makes teeth go bad and causes gum disease.
Too many sugary drinks and snacks	Sugar reacts with bacteria in plaque, producing harmful acid which eats away at the teeth

Taking care of your mouth and teeth

RESOURCE 11

To look after your teeth and mouth

Do

Don't

Taking care of your mouth and teeth

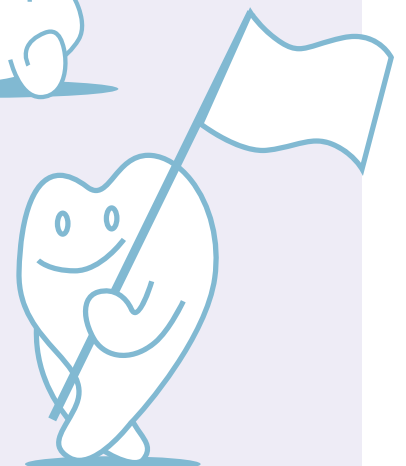
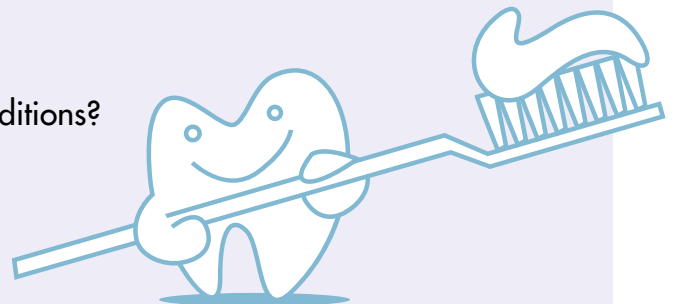
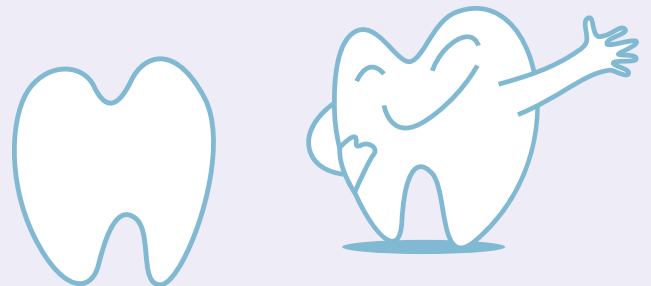
RESOURCE 12

Disease/condition	What causes it	Treatment
Bad breath (Halitosis)	Not brushing teeth, strong smelling food, smoking, some medication, crash dieting, some medical conditions	Usually, the most effective treatment is improving your dental hygiene. As part of your daily routine, you should, floss between your teeth, brush your teeth and gums, clean your tongue
Acid		
Plaque		
Gum disease		
Gingivitis		
Periodontal disease		
Mouth cancer		

Taking care of your mouth and teeth

RESOURCE 13

1. What causes tooth decay?
 - a. Caffeine
 - b. Age
 - b. Acid
 - d. Plaque
2. From what age should your child be visiting the dentist?
 - a. 5 years
 - b. 1 year
 - b. 3 years
 - d. 6 months
3. Halitosis is the medical name for?
 - a. Black hairy tongue
 - b. Bad breath
 - b. Plaque build up
4. What's best way to prevent gum disease?
 - a. Use fluoride toothpaste
 - b. Remove plaque
5. Poor oral health can lead to serious health conditions?
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. Tooth loss is an inevitable part of aging?
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. What is the early stage of gum disease known as?
 - a. Gingivitis
 - b. Loose teeth
 - c. Dentures
8. Black hairy tongue is a deadly oral disease?
 - a. True
 - b. False
9. Oral cancer that is caught early is treatable and curable?
 - a. True
 - b. False
10. A toothbrush should be replaced every?
 - a. 2–3 months
 - b. 4–6 months



There are no audio scripts for this topic.

ENGAGE ACTIVITY / Resource 1

- Average number of teeth for a two-year old – 8
- Number of minutes you need to brush your teeth for – 2
- Number of canine teeth in an adult mouth – 4
- Number of primary (milk) teeth in a child's mouth – 20
- Age up to which everyone gets free dental care – 18
- Number of permanent teeth – 32
- Number of UK children per primary school class with tooth decay – 9
- Number of surfaces on each tooth – 5
- Number of months you should change your toothbrush after – 3
- Number of minutes it takes the mouth to get rid of harmful acid caused by sugary foods and drink – 60

ACTIVITY 1 / Resource 2

Milk teeth

Babies' teeth begin to develop before they are born, but in most cases don't come through until they're between 6 and 12 months old.

Most children have a full set of 20 milk or baby teeth by the time they're three years old. When they reach five or six, these teeth will start to fall out, making way for adult teeth.

Adult teeth

By the age of 12 to 14, most children have lost all their baby teeth and have their adult teeth.

There are 32 adult teeth in total – 12 more than in the baby set. The last four of these, called wisdom teeth, usually emerge later than the others, generally between the ages of 17 and 21.

What are teeth made of?

The part of the tooth that you can see above the gum is called the **crown**. This is covered in hard, shiny **enamel**. Enamel is the **hardest** substance in the body and protects the more sensitive inner parts of the tooth.

Underneath this is the dentine – a sensitive substance that makes up most of the **tooth**. Dentine is a hard substance, though not quite as hard as enamel.

Dentine protects the inner **part** of the tooth, called the pulp. The **pulp** is where each tooth's **blood** supply and **nerve** endings are found. The blood supply is what keeps the teeth **alive** and **healthy**. The nerve endings send **messages** to the brain, such as whether you're eating something **hot** or **cold**, or if you have a **bad** or damaged tooth.

The pulp goes all the way into the root of the **tooth**, which is hidden under your **gum**. Cementum covers the root of the tooth, and fibres connect the tooth to the **jawbone**.

Types of teeth

There are four different types of teeth:

- **Incisors.** These are your four front teeth on the top and bottom jaw. They're used for cutting and chopping food.
- **Canine teeth.** These are sharp, pointy teeth. You have one on each side of your incisors on your top and bottom jaw, making a total of four. They help to tear food.
- **Premolars.** Next to your canine teeth are your premolars (also called bicuspid teeth). You have eight premolars in total: four on your top jaw and four on the bottom. They are bigger and wider than your incisors and canine teeth, and are used for crushing and grinding food.
- **Molars.** You have eight molars: four on top and four on the bottom. These are your strongest teeth and work with your tongue to help you swallow food, mashing it up until it's ready to be swallowed safely.

ACTIVITY 3 / Resources 5a and b

- **Acid** – Acid attacks teeth and wears down the hard enamel on the outside which protects them. This makes teeth weak and can cause holes in teeth (cavities) and/or make your teeth sensitive
- **Plaque** – This is a film of germs (bacteria) that forms on the teeth every day and which attacks teeth. It needs to be removed by brushing
- **Gum disease** – The gums will be swollen, sore or infected. Smoking increases the risk of this as it limits the blood flow to the gums. It is caused by plaque. It can lead to gumboils if not treated
- **Gingivitis** – This is when the gums become swollen (inflamed) and can feel sore and may bleed when brushing
- **Periodontal disease** – This is when you have gingivitis for a long time. The bones which hold your teeth in places wears away and this causes your teeth to become loose and they may fall out. It cannot be cured but it can be managed successfully
- **Mouth cancer** – People who drink too much and smoke are 30 times more likely to develop this disease because alcohol helps the mouth to (take in) the tobacco. Look for changes in your mouth – sore patches or ulcers that don't heal after 3 weeks may be a sign of this
- **Bad breath (halitosis)** – The most common cause of this is not keeping your mouth and teeth clean. Bacteria which builds up on your teeth, tongue and gums can produce foul smelling gases. Eating strong flavoured foods, smoking, crash dieting and some medications can cause this

ACTIVITY 4 / Resource 6

1. Drink fruit juice slowly – **FALSE**
This won't help protect your teeth from the high level of acid found in fruit juice. The best way to protect your teeth from the effects of drinking fruit juice is to drink it only at mealtimes when you are eating as well.
2. Eating a breadstick after eating fruit will help get rid of harmful acid – **TRUE**
Cheese and breadsticks contain alkali, which neutralises the acid left by the food you've consumed.
3. Only eat/drink items containing sugar as snacks rather than as part of a meal – **FALSE**
This should be the opposite. Sugary snacks and treats should only be eaten and drunk in very small amounts to protect teeth. It is better for your teeth if you have these sugary treats as part of a meal rather than as a snack.
4. A healthy mouth means no sugary foods/drinks – **FALSE**
Sugary foods and drinks are meant to be treats and you should only have them in very small amounts.
5. Electric toothbrushes are more effective than manual ones – **FALSE**
It doesn't matter whether you use an electric or manual toothbrush. They're both equally as good, as long as you brush all the surfaces of all your teeth and you use fluoride toothpaste. However, some people find it easier to clean their teeth thoroughly with an electric toothbrush.
6. Whitening toothpastes lighten your teeth – **FALSE**
7. Having a healthy mouth and gums can help improve general health – **TRUE**
Eating well and healthily, not smoking, not drinking too much alcohol are all things which are good for your mouth and teeth, and they are also good for your body too. Doing what you need to keep your mouth healthy will be good for your general health therefore. Also, having good teeth and fresh breath helps confidence and self-esteem, emotional and social wellbeing.

ACTIVITY 5 / Resource 8

1. **When should I brush my teeth?**

Brush your teeth for about two minutes last thing at night before you go to bed and on one other occasion every day. Your dentist or hygienist may give you more advice based on your own dental health and needs.

2. **Should I use an electric or manual toothbrush?**

It doesn't matter whether you use an electric or manual toothbrush. They're both equally as good, as long as you brush all the surfaces of all your teeth and you use fluoride toothpaste. However, some people find it easier to clean their teeth thoroughly with an electric toothbrush.

3. **What should I look for in a toothbrush?**

For most adults, a toothbrush with a small head and a compact, angled arrangement of long and short round-end bristles is fine. Medium or soft bristles are best for most people.

If you're using an electric brush, one with an oscillating or rotating head may work better than a manual toothbrush.

However, making sure you thoroughly clean your teeth at least twice a day is more important than the type of brush you use. If in doubt, ask your dentist.

4. **What type of toothpaste should I use?**

It's important to use a toothpaste with the right concentration of fluoride. Check the packaging to find out how much fluoride each brand contains. Adults should use a toothpaste that contains at least 1,350 parts per million (ppm) fluoride.

5. **How to brush your teeth**

Make sure you brush all the surfaces of all your teeth, which should take about two minutes. Remember to brush the inside surfaces, outside surfaces and the chewing surfaces of your teeth.

Don't rinse with water straight after toothbrushing.

After brushing, spit out any excess toothpaste. Don't rinse your mouth immediately after brushing, as it will wash away the concentrated fluoride in the remaining toothpaste, thus diluting it and reducing its preventative effects.

6. **Should I use mouthwash?**

Using a mouthwash that contains fluoride can help to prevent tooth decay, but don't use mouthwash – even a fluoride one – straight after brushing your teeth or it will wash away the concentrated fluoride in the toothpaste left on your teeth. Choose a different time to use mouthwash, such as after lunch. Don't eat or drink for 30 minutes after using a fluoride mouthwash.

7. **How to use dental floss**

Flossing isn't just for dislodging food wedged between your teeth. Regular flossing may also reduce gum disease and bad breath by removing plaque that forms along the gum line. It's best to floss before brushing your teeth.

- Take 12–18 inches (30–45cm) of floss or dental tape and grasp it so you have a couple of inches of floss taut between your hands.
- Slip the floss or dental tape between the teeth and into the area between your teeth and gums, as far as it will go.
- Floss with 8–10 strokes, up and down between each tooth, to dislodge food and plaque.

8. **How to use interdental brushes**

You can use interdental brushes or single-tufted brushes instead of flossing, especially if there are gaps between your teeth. The brush should fit snugly between the teeth.

Never use toothpicks to remove trapped food from between your teeth, as you may damage your gums, which could lead to an infection.

9. Your dentist or hygienist can advise you on the best way to use interdental cleaning for your teeth.

ACTION / Resource 13

1. C
2. D
3. B
4. A
5. A – Some studies have linked poor oral health to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, osteoporosis and even Alzheimer's
6. B – Teeth do not die a natural death
7. A – Bacteria in plaque builds up – gums become red and swollen. And you can often see blood when brushing your teeth. The good news is that is reversable at this stage
8. A – Not deadly but does exist! It is a bacteria or fungi in the mouth.
Remedy – oral hygiene
9. A – Yes, true if caught early
10. A