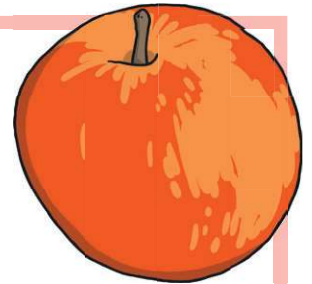


Teeth

You bite into an apple and then try to tell your mum about what happened at school. But something feels funny.....one of your baby teeth has fallen out! It's been loose forever, and now there it is, right in your hand. You now have an empty space in your mouth and a brand new smile!



Before you put that tooth under your pillow, did you know that there is much more to that tooth than meets the eye? A single tooth has many different parts that make it work. And teeth play an important role in your daily life. They not only help you to eat apples, they also help you talk.

Milk Teeth



Unlike your heart or brain, your teeth weren't ready to work from the day you were born. Very occasionally, babies have the beginnings of their first teeth when they are born, but teeth don't usually become visible until babies are about 6 to 12 months old.

After a baby's first tooth breaks through, more and more teeth begin to appear, until there are 20. These teeth are often called milk teeth, or baby teeth. When a child gets to age 5 or 6, these teeth start falling out, one by one.

A milk tooth falls out because it is being pushed out of the way by the permanent (adult) tooth that is growing behind it. By about the age of 12 or 13, most children have lost all of their baby teeth and have a full set of permanent teeth.

There are 28 permanent teeth in all — eight more than the original set of baby teeth. Between the ages of 17 and 25, four more teeth called wisdom teeth usually grow in at the back of the mouth. They complete the adult set of 32 teeth.

Terrific Teeth

The part of the tooth you can see is called the **crown**. The crown of each tooth is covered with **enamel**, which is very hard. Enamel is a tough substance that works as a barrier, protecting the inside parts of the tooth.



If you were able to peel away the enamel, you would find **dentin**. Dentin makes up the largest part of the tooth. Although it is not as tough as enamel, it is also very hard.

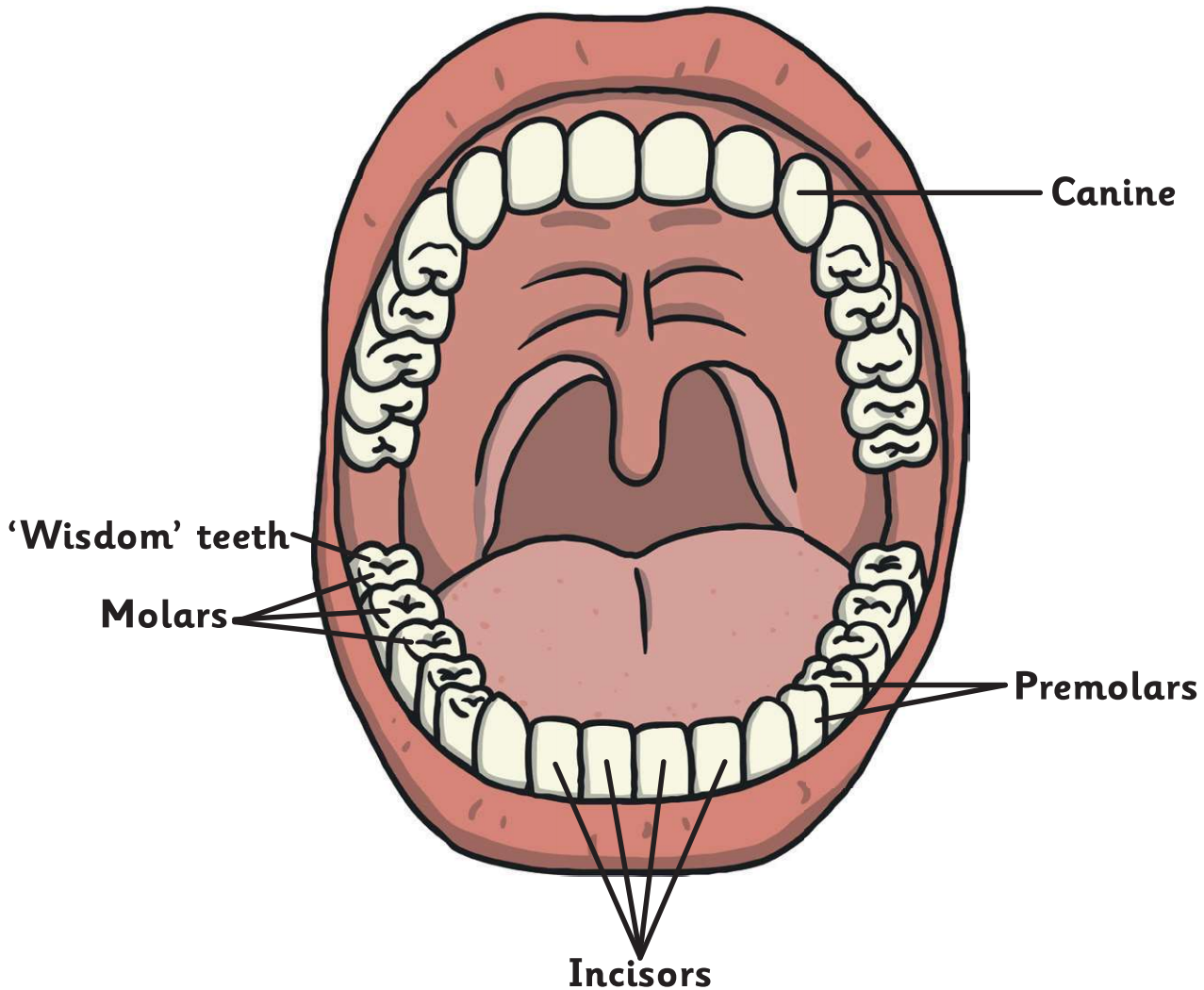
Dentin protects the innermost part of the tooth, called the **pulp**. The pulp is where each tooth's nerve endings and blood supply are found. When you eat hot soup, bite into a super-cold scoop of ice cream or fall and hurt a tooth, it's your pulp that hurts. The nerve endings inside the pulp send messages to the brain about what's going on. The pulp also contains the tooth's blood vessels, which feed the tooth and keep it alive and healthy.

The pulp goes all the way down into the root of the tooth, which is under the gum. **Cementum** makes up the root of the tooth, which is anchored to the jawbone.



Tooth Types

You've probably noticed that you have different types of permanent teeth in your mouth. Each one has its own function.



Type of Tooth	Description	Function
Incisor	sharp, shaped like a small chisel	used for cutting and shearing
Canine	pointed and sharp	used for gripping and tearing
Premolar	large and strong with ridges	used for grinding
Molar	wider and stronger than premolars, more ridges	used for crushing and chewing

Toothy Tools for Talking

Your teeth are great for chewing, but you also need them to talk. Different teeth work with your tongue and lips to help you form sounds. Try saying the word “tooth” slowly and notice how your tongue first hits the inside of your incisors to produce the hard “t” sound and then goes in between your upper and lower teeth to make the “th” sound.

And if you love to sing “la la la la la,” you can thank those teeth every time you sing a song. How do your teeth help you to make that “l” sound?

Belle’s Brilliant Blog

Belle is a dentist. She writes a weekly blog for the patients at her surgery to read while they wait for their appointments. Below are some examples of her blog entries.

May 10th

Teeth and Food

This week we have been so busy! One of our dentists has been away, so I’ve been covering her patients. It’s also school holidays, so the surgery is full of children. I always love it at this time of year: everyone is happy, relaxed and enjoying the sun. Well, most people. We’ve had a few children this week who have had to have cavities filled. One of my patients asked me what he can do to help his daughter Sammy, who eats lots of sugary snacks, look after her teeth better (she didn’t enjoy having two fillings in her teeth). Now I know that no diet is absolutely perfect – including mine! It is unrealistic to expect that we should all give up sugary foods and drinks completely, but encouraging healthier diets can prevent cavities and improve dental health. I asked my patient to encourage his child to eat foods that are healthy for her teeth and gums, for example carrots, apples, and other hard fruits. They are delicious and useful - they can help scour and clean teeth of sugars and acids. Snacking on sugary foods is one of the primary causes of tooth decay, so remember, folks, think about what you eat.



June 17th

Flossing

Do you floss? Perhaps you tell us that you floss, but really you don't? Flossing really is one of the most beneficial things you can do for your teeth. Used properly, dental floss helps to prevent gum disease by getting rid of pieces of food and sticky plaque from between your teeth. Plaque is made of bacteria – yuck! You must want to get rid of that! If it builds up, the bacteria can irritate the gums and cause inflammation. Why cause yourself unwanted pain and expense? We have free samples of floss for you to try – just ask one of the staff at reception. Your teeth will thank you for it!



November 6th

Bonfire Toffee

Another busy day today! All that toffee-apple chewing out in the cold air has caused problems for some of our patients, who rang in to make emergency appointments this morning. It seems that chewy bonfire toffee is just the thing for breaking teeth and pulling out fillings, leaving our patients in pain and poorer – some patients had to pay a lot of money to get their teeth sorted out. The cold weather is also not helping those exposed nerves! We've fixed everyone up and made them feel better...but I imagine that some of them won't be rushing for the bonfire toffee again next year!