



# Teeth

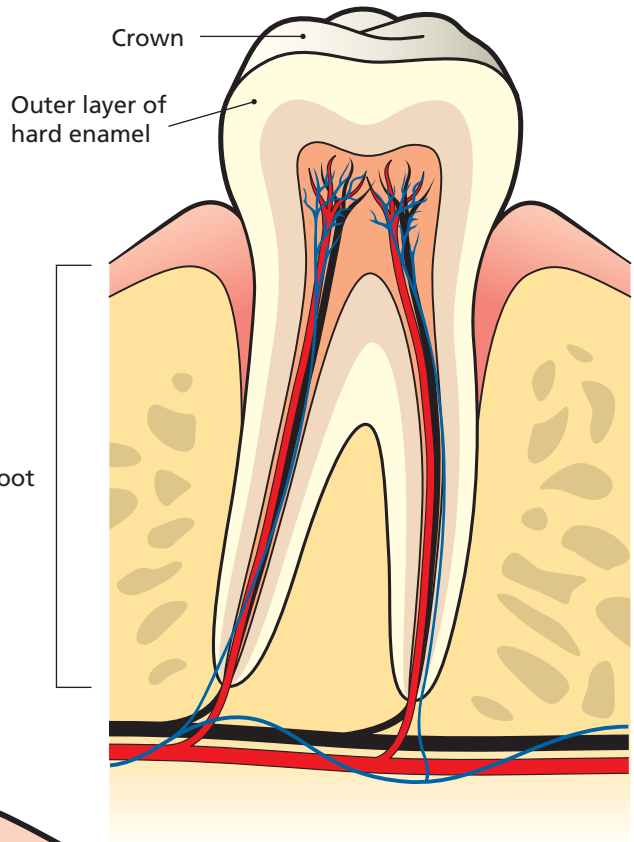
**TEETH** are vital for breaking up food into the small pieces that the body can use. Each kind of tooth has a special place, and a special shape for the job it has to do.

A tooth is like a peg sticking out of your jaw (Picture 1). You have two sets of teeth. You start to grow the first set – called **MILK TEETH** – when you are about six months old, and start to get the second, and final, set when you are about six years old.

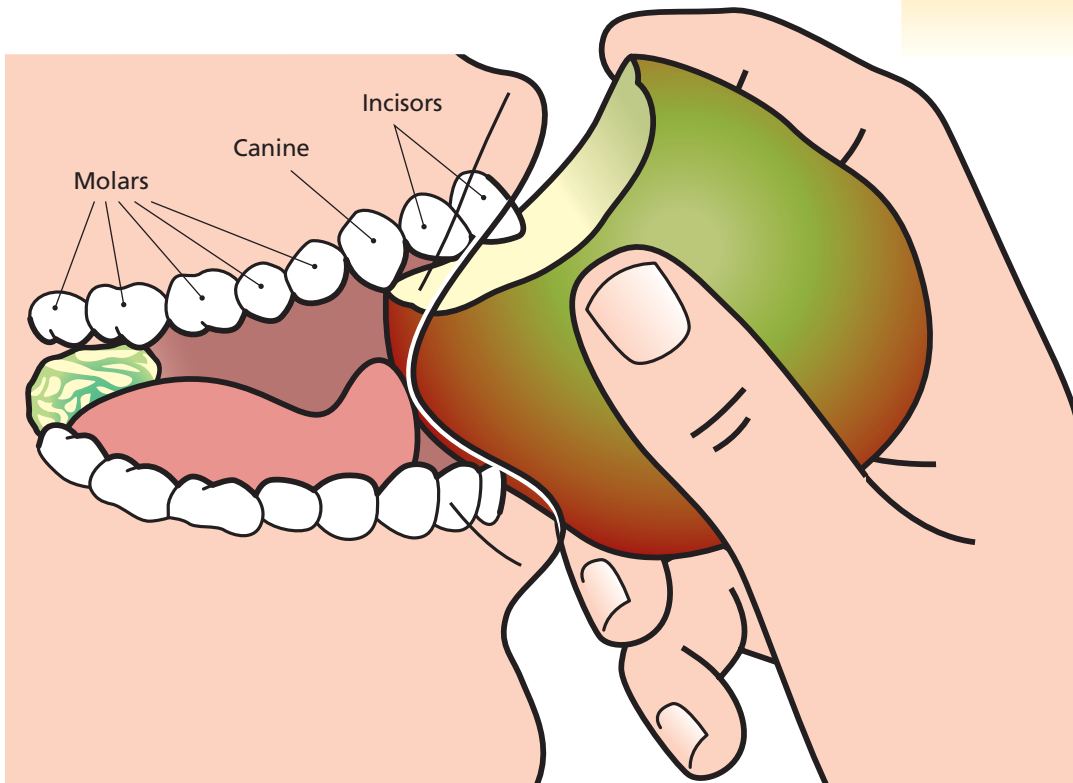
## What the teeth do

The teeth break large pieces of food into small pieces so that they can be swallowed easily. To do their job of breaking down food, they have to be hard, specially shaped, and they must not break easily.

There are three different kinds of teeth in your mouth. This is what they do.



▲ (Picture 1) A tooth is a living part of the body. If the hard cover, called enamel, rots, the tender inside becomes exposed.



◀ (Picture 2) The types of teeth in our mouths.

## Cutting teeth

The front teeth in your mouth are designed for cutting. They are chisel shaped (Picture 2). This kind of tooth is called an incisor. There are four incisors in the top and bottom set of teeth. They are shaped to cut into food as you bite.

## Tearing teeth

Behind the front teeth are teeth with pointed tops. These are called canine teeth. The points are used to tear food into smaller pieces so other teeth can then crush the food.

## Grinding teeth

At the back of the mouth there are broad, flattish teeth for crushing and grinding food. They are called molars. These teeth get larger towards the back.

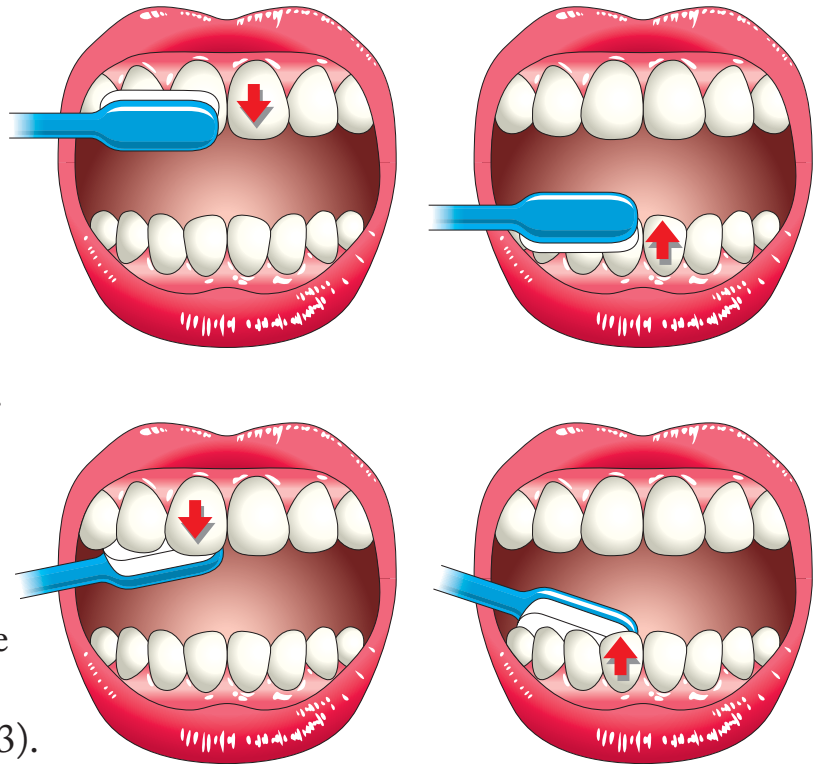
## Caring for teeth

Teeth are usually covered in a natural, sticky coating called **PLAQUE**. Sugary foods stick to the plaque, and the plaque changes the sugar into acid. The acids then begin to rot the **ENAMEL** (Picture 3).

The best way to prevent this problem is to eat foods that scrape the plaque off your teeth. Apples and other hard fruit and vegetables will do this, but cleaning your teeth regularly is the most effective thing you can do because the toothpaste also contains a substance that balances out the acid (Picture 4).



◀ (Picture 3) Tooth decay causes holes to develop in the enamel.



▲ (Picture 4) How to brush your teeth to remove as much plaque as possible.

### Summary

- Your teeth are designed to help you break up and crush your food.
- Teeth can become damaged if they are covered in plaque.
- Cleaning your teeth protects them from decay.