



TOOTHSMART

40+ Activities for Teaching Oral Health,
Hygiene and Habits to Grades K–8

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VISIT A DENTIST and DELTA DENTAL OF KANSAS



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Teacher discretion & student well-being. Role-play activities are voluntary. Use fictional scenarios and neutral, judgment-free language so no student feels embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, blamed or singled out. Focus on information and choices — not personal habits or appearance. Do not ask for personal health, diet, insurance or family details. Provide opt-out roles — note-taker, timekeeper or case reader — so students can participate without penalty. Refer students with pain, swelling or fever to the school nurse or a dentist.

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WELCOME TO TOOTHSMART

A Complete Oral Health Toolkit for Busy Educators.

Oral health isn't just about teeth — it's about full-body health, confidence and long-term well-being.

Only 55% of Kansas kids brush their teeth twice a day, 33% brush just once a day and the rest brush a few times a week at best.¹ Across the U.S., classrooms are losing an estimated 34 million hours to unplanned dental care annually.² The reasons are varied and ***sometimes even the basics — like a toothbrush and a ride to the dentist's office — are difficult to access.***

We believe teachers can instill lifelong lessons from simple moments — a quirky take on something boring, a quick demo, a chance for students to teach each other — that ripple across a whole school year. But we also know you're busy, which is why ***we've curated practical, flexible activities for real classrooms that are ready to go and designed to lighten your load, not add to it.***

This guide is for K–8 teachers, counselors, club leaders, school nurses, homeschooling parents — anyone supporting kids day to day. Our goal is to build practical habits and students who feel confident making healthy, informed decisions about their own health.

What to expect:

- Age-appropriate, hands-on lessons with step-by-step instructions, supply lists and printable templates
- Alignment to National Health Education Standards 1–8 (see [pages 24 and 25](#))
- Information and resources for families with low incomes, transportation barriers and other additional needs

Take from this guide what serves you, skip what doesn't, remix freely and share it with anyone who'd benefit — no permission or credit needed.



Music



Discussion



Craft



Activity



Game



Experiment



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VIDEO PLAYLIST

Short clips to help you plan and demo activities — scan the QR code or visit our K–8 ToothSmart Picks at bit.ly/toothsmartvideos



ANY GRADE, ANY TIME

Below you'll find activities you can run in 5–10 minutes — brain breaks, bell ringers, or transitions. Each is low prep and works for any grade with simple tweaks. Use them to reinforce one idea at a time — brushing for 2 minutes, cleaning the gumline, spotting sticky or acidic snacks — and keep oral health top of mind without a full lesson. **Print this page and keep it handy for fast, high-impact refreshers.**

2-Minute Timer Hack

Dance to a class brush song and mark 30-second switch points

Tweaks: K–2: Call out “outside → inside → chewing surfaces” | 3–5: Add tongue | 6–8: Lead the timing

Mouthguard Moment

Name one sport that needs a mouthguard and one reason

Tweaks: K–2: Include a show and tell with a real mouthguard | 3–5: Switch to a lightning round: list as many sports as they can in one minute | 6–8: Share what they know about risks associated with their specific sports

Tooth Type Charades

Act out tooth actions (cut, tear, crush, grind); the rest of the class names tooth type and its job

Tweaks: K–2: Front vs. back teeth | 3–5: All four types | 6–8: Add “Where in the mouth”

Sticky or Not — Speed Sort

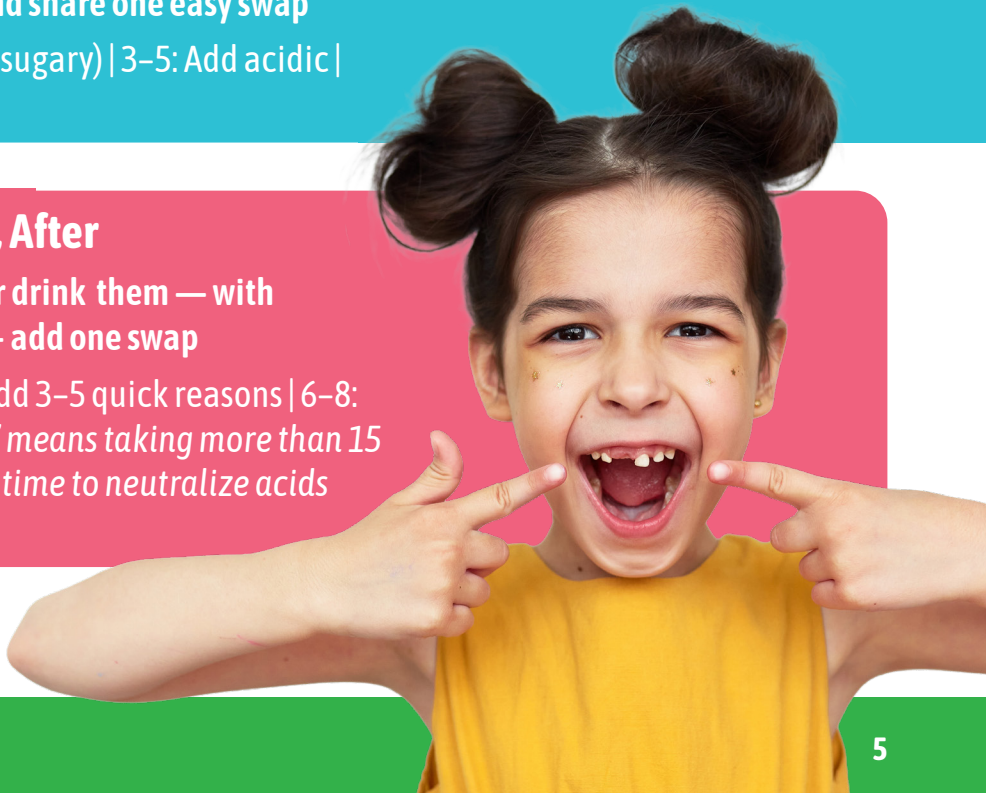
Sort foods into sticky, sugary, acidic and share one easy swap

Tweaks: K–2: Two bins only (sticky and sugary) | 3–5: Add acidic | 6–8: Justify swaps with one reason

Snack Map — Before, During, After

Group snacks by the best time to eat or drink them — with meals, during practice, after school — add one swap

Tweaks: K–2: Use picture cards | 3–5: add 3–5 quick reasons | 6–8: Consider sipping time (“Long-sipping” means taking more than 15 minutes to finish a drink. Saliva needs time to neutralize acids so every new sip resets the clock!)



Kindergarten

AGES 5-6

Basic Skills Matter, and So Do Baby Teeth

Baby teeth matter. They help kids chew, speak, and save space for grown-up teeth — so they need care now, not later.

Most kinders aren't brushing twice daily and many families worry about food and bedtime routines, so these activities practice simple brushing and tooth-friendly choices in fun, quick bursts.



SONG & DANCE

Music and movement are perfect for helping kids memorize routine chores.

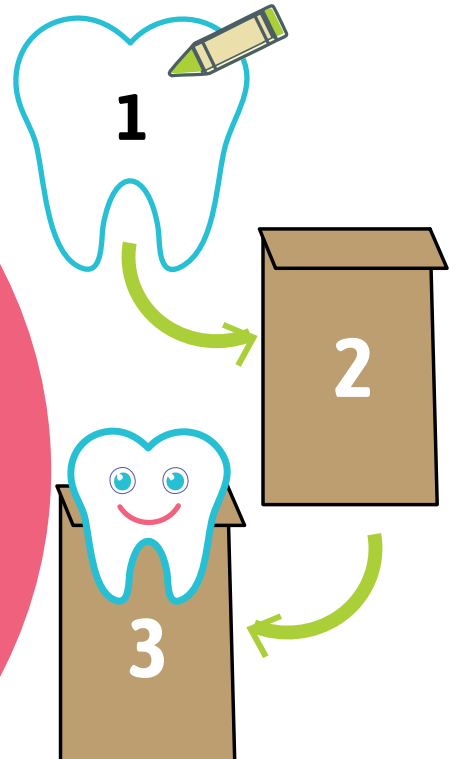


Search online for toothbrushing songs and videos and have a tooth brushing dance party (you'll find some on our [playlist](#))! Add specific dance moves that mimic tooth brushing such as up & down, left & right, side to side, etc.

TOOTH PUPPETS

Reinforce what they have learned with puppet storytelling.

1. Have each child cut the shape of a tooth from white construction paper (use the outline on [page 26](#))
2. Take a paper bag (the kind you'd use for a sack lunch) and, keeping it unopened and flat, turn it upside down
3. Attach the tooth to the bag so the middle of the tooth is in line with the flap
4. Have them demonstrate what they know about oral health habits by acting out a conversation with their tooth puppets

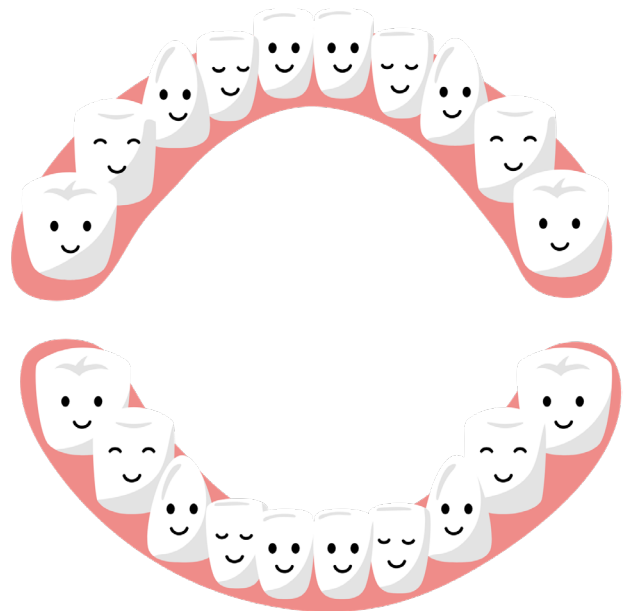


PLAQUE PAINTING

Use this practical exercise to remind kids to brush all their teeth and not just one spot!



1. Print and laminate the tooth poster on page 27 (or use a plastic sleeve)
2. Have the children use dry erase markers to add “plaque” to the teeth
3. They should then use a damp toothbrush to brush the germs away
4. Encourage them to pay attention to how many teeth there are and their different shapes, and to brush them *all* using circular motions until all the germs are gone



FLOSS LIKE A BOSS

Flossing gets in the nooks and crannies where toothbrushes can't reach and helps to remove all the food, bacteria and plaque that brushing alone can't. This exercise helps kids visualize (and practice) flossing!



Key Learning Points



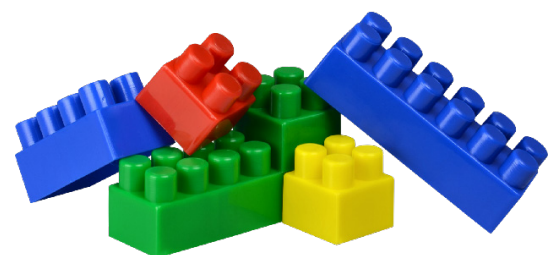
1. Plaque and germs hide between teeth
2. Floss can reach places that toothbrushes can't
3. Toothbrushing **and** flossing together gives the best clean

To play:

1. Stick small pieces of dough in the gaps of the bricks/ cartons/trays
2. Have the children try to remove all the dough with the brush (they should not be able to)
3. Then have them use the yarn/pipe cleaners to remove the rest
4. Discuss how much easier it was to remove the dough with the “floss” vs. just the brush

You will need:

- Oversized toy bricks, or upside down egg cartons or ice cube trays
- Play dough (any kind or color)
- Bristled hairbrushes
- Yarn or pipe cleaners



1st Grade

AGES 6-7

Incisors Don't Usually Pass First Grade!

Around six, baby incisors fall out and permanent teeth **grow in. With them come pits and fissures — depressions and grooves on the surfaces of the teeth where plaque hides.** Dental teams recommend adding sealants (thin coatings) to permanent molars to help protect them.

This grade's activities continue to link mouth changes to smart food and drink choices.



GROCERY DASH

Introduce the connections between diet and oral health with this competitive treasure hunt!

You will need:

- Pretend food and drinks. Toy foods are perfect but you could also use flashcards. You will need a variety of foods including fruits, vegetables, dairy/plant-based proteins, meats, eggs, sweets, soda, water, juice
- Two shopping baskets (or two items to represent them)
- Two tooth cutouts: Happy Tooth and Sad Tooth ([pages 28/29](#))



To play:

1. Hide the food and drink items around the classroom
2. Split the class into two teams and set a timer (you decide how long)
3. One team must hunt for items that are **tooth-friendly** and get them to **Happy Tooth's** basket before the time runs out, the other must hunt for **tooth-unfriendly** items and get them to **Sad Tooth's** basket
4. At the end of the game, empty the baskets and discuss to determine if each food was put in the correct basket, **and why**

DO THE BRUSH BEAT FREEZE

Find something to represent the four quadrants of the mouth. Play any song and have the kids dance as they "air-brush" tiny circles toward the quadrant you point to, **switching every 30 seconds.** Freeze when the music stops and call-out: "What surface did we miss?" (Outside, inside, chewing surfaces?)





TOOTH DEFENDERS ASSEMBLE!

Harness their creativity to build a squad of tooth defenders!

Have the children use their favorite craft materials to design their own superhero that protects teeth from cavities. Encourage them to consider what foods, drinks and habits are good for teeth, and which ones must be defeated!

EGGSPERIMENT

Eggshells have a similar chemical composition to tooth enamel. This experiment demonstrates some of the effects of the drinks we consume every day.



Key Learning Points



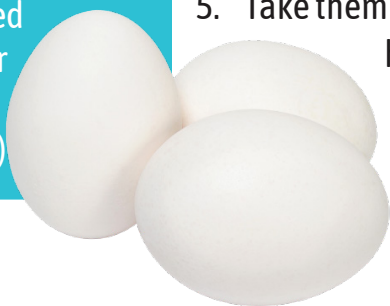
You will need:

- A toothbrush
- Fluoridated toothpaste
- A range of drinks. We recommend water, coffee, juice, cola, clear soda, sports drink
- 12 x hard boiled eggs with their shells on (2 per drink type)

Instructions:

1. Take half the eggs and use the toothbrush to brush them gently all over with water and toothpaste
2. Fill containers with each of your drinks
3. Place one brushed egg and one non-brushed egg in each container
4. Soak them in the refrigerator for 24 hours
5. Take them out and discuss how the drinks

have stained or changed the eggshells, and what the differences are between those that were brushed and those that weren't



TOOTHPASTE TEST

Show them there is a world beyond minty fresh!

Have each child try small samples of different flavored toothpastes, and guess the flavors (have them spit it out if using fluoridated toothpastes).



2nd Grade

AGES 7-8

Mind the Gap!

As baby teeth make way for permanent ones, brushing still matters — gaps can leave gums extra-exposed.

Parents of 7 and 8-year olds tend to be more worried about their children eating and drinking before bed than other parents, so this section helps kids map tooth changes and visualize hidden sugars to build better nightly habits and keep them accountable.



TEETH TIMELINE

This timeline is a guide only. Teeth erupt and fall out at different times for everyone.

Help each child create a chart to show how teeth emerge and fall out over the course of childhood.* Use the activity sheets on pages 30 and 31.



- MONTHS**
- 6 Incisors (front teeth) start to erupt, usually beginning with a middle lower tooth
 - 13 First molars (near the back of the mouth) erupt
 - 16 Canines (pointed teeth, next to the incisors) arrive
 - 23 Second molars (at the very back of the mouth) complete the set

By age 3 most children have 20 teeth:

- Incisors x 8
- First molars x 4
- Canines x 4
- Second molars x 4

The 20 baby teeth start to fall out around age 6, and are replaced by 28 permanent teeth (32 if they get their wisdom teeth between ages 17 and 21).

- YEARS**
- 6 Baby incisors begin to fall out
 - 8 Baby incisors are all gone
 - 9 Adult incisors are grown in, first molars begin to fall out
Premolars start to form (these are new!) between the canines and first molars | Canines and second molars begin to fall out
 - 10 Baby canines, first molars, and second molars have all fallen out | Permanent canines, premolars and permanent first molars have grown in | Permanent second molars begin to erupt
 - 11

By age 13 most children have 28 teeth:

- Permanent incisors x 8
- Permanent first molars x 4
- Permanent canines x 4
- Premolars x 8
- Permanent second molars x 4



SMILE COLLAGE

Use magazine cutouts to create a collage of healthy smile habits and foods.



A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR ... OR SIX

The recommended daily intake of sugar for children is **6 spoonfuls (6 cubes) for an entire day**, but some drinks and snacks contain more than that in just one portion. Help them equate diet with nutrition by visualizing sugar content.



You will need:

- A box of sugar cubes
- 1 bag of “groceries” per team (real items, toys or flashcards) containing:
 - Soda
 - Candy bars
 - Ice cream
 - Sugary breakfast cereal
 - Syrup
 - Ketchup
 - Water

To play:

1. Split the class into teams and give each team a bag of groceries
2. Have each group line up the groceries in order of what **they** think is most to least sugary
3. When they have all finished, use the sugar cubes and your own bag of groceries to show them exactly how much sugar is in each item and how that compares to a child’s

Key Learning Points



1. There is often more sugar than we think in things we eat and drink every day
2. It’s not just sweets that contain sugar, savory foods and even breakfast cereals do, too
3. Our daily sugar intake can add up quickly



Soda: 10 cubes per 8 oz can | **Candy bar:** 8 cubes per regular size bar | **Ice cream:** 7 cubes per one cup | **Sugary breakfast cereal:** 5 cubes per 1 cup | **Syrup:** 3 cubes per 1 Tbsp | **Ketchup:** 1 cube per 1 Tbsp



TOOTH DIARY

Give each child the template on [page 32](#) to track brushing and flossing routines at home and reflect on their own habits.



TOOTH-TYPE TWO-STEP

As music plays, call out a type of tooth: kids do the matching move to learn their different functions: **Incisors (cut):** scissor-hands chomp | **Canines (tear):** “tug” dance | **Premolars (crush):** fist pound | **Molars (grind):** big stomp.



3rd Grade

AGES 8-9

They're Not Babies Anymore!

By now most kids have their front adult teeth — and families often worry most about flossing and sugary drinks. **This section builds real understanding, not just routines:** students learn where plaque hides, why two minutes with fluoride matters and how tooth types do different jobs. They also practice media smarts — spotting tricks in ads and separating claims from facts — so they can explain their healthy choices.

Activities focus on showing and teaching (peer demos, quick checks), helping students feel proud of skills they can model at home.



BRUSH BATON RELAY

Get them moving and working as a team as they practice proper brushing technique and identifying the different kinds of permanent teeth. You will need room for them to run around safely.

You will need:

- Laminated copies of the tooth poster on [page 33](#), enlarged (one per team)
- Dry erase markers
- Damp toothbrushes (one per team)

To play:

1. Split the class into teams of 3–6
2. Place the tooth posters on a wall or table at one end of the room and line the teams up at the other end
3. Give the first person in each team a damp toothbrush
4. On “Go!,” the relay will begin

and each player will take a turn identifying and brushing a specific set of teeth until all the marker is gone. After brushing, players must run back and pass the brush to the next teammate, who takes their turn

- Player 1 must brush the top incisors (x4)
 - Player 2 must brush the top canines (x2) and premolars (x4)
 - Player 3 must brush the top first molars (x2) and second molars (x2)
 - Repeat for the bottom row of teeth (if a team only has three players, go back to player 1)

At the end of the relay, gather the teams and check how well the teeth were “cleaned”

Key Learning Points



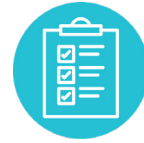
Proper Brushing Technique includes:

- Small circular motions
- 45-degree angle to the gumline
- 2 minutes
- Top, bottom, front, back, inside, outside



AD BREAK

Split the class into teams of 3-5 and have them write and perform a commercial for a pretend toothpaste.* You could even film the commercials and screen them for the whole class.



Each ad should include:



- 3 reasons why brushing is important
- 2 things that are special about their pretend toothpaste
- 1 memorable tagline that encourages good at-home oral care

*Record or share student images only with consent and per district policy.



DENTAL DETECTIVES

Test their oral health knowledge *and* their critical thinking as they analyze clues to solve dental mysteries — they'll need to apply their own knowledge to solve the clues! Finish the exercise with a class discussion.



To play:

1. Divide the class into small detective teams (2–4 students per team)
2. Give each team a scenario card and a clue set from pages [34](#) and [35](#) — read the scenario aloud or let teams read them independently
3. Give them 10–15 minutes to analyze the clues and determine:
 - What dental issue is happening?
 - What caused it?
 - What is the best solution or way to prevent it from happening again?
4. Have each team present their findings to the class. After they have presented their conclusions, you can reveal the answers (also on pages [34](#) and [35](#))



TOOTH TRIVIA

Use the trivia questions on [page 36](#) and award a fun prize to the winners



4th Grade

AGES 9-10

Destination: Independence

At this age, parents are still very much engaged with their children's at-home oral health routine but it tends to drop after 4th grade so we stretch students' independent thinking while keeping tasks quick and doable.

This section invites kids to plan, create, test and explain through a fun combo of art and science and lots of opportunities for discussion.



SNACK PLANNER

Practice making food decisions based on oral health by designing a tooth-friendly meal plan

Give them the template on [page 37](#) to plan a day's meals — including breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and drinks — that are good for oral health. Ask them to present it to the class and explain why they made the choices they did.



GAME TIME



Small groups will create and play their own board game that teaches the path to a healthy smile! They'll need to work together to make sure their game promotes good oral health, hygiene and habits!

Using the step-by-step instructions on [page 38](#) students will:

1. Design a game board
2. Define actions and consequences
3. Make question or challenge cards
4. Decorate their board
5. Test it out and crown a winner!

When they have finished playing, discuss what they learned and which choices helped them move ahead the most.





ACID VS. ENAMEL

Chalk is made primarily of calcium carbonate, so has a similar* mineral content to teeth. While it is softer and more porous than real enamel, it reacts to acids (like those found in sugary foods and drinks) in a way that makes for a great visual experiment!



You will need:

- The observation worksheet on [page 39](#)
- White chalkboard (not sidewalk) chalk
- Clear cups or glasses (two per group)
- White vinegar
- Tap water
- Timer or clock
- Optional: magnifying glass

Instructions:

1. Split the class into small groups
2. Have each group fill one cup with vinegar and one with water and label them accordingly
3. Explain that they are going to see how the chalk reacts to the water and vinegar; what do they predict will happen to the chalk in each cup? Why might this matter for our teeth?
4. Have them write or draw their predictions before you start the experiment

5. When you are ready to start the experiment, have them place one piece of chalk in each cup and observe what happens

6. Using the observation worksheet on [page 39](#), they should record their observations at 5, 10, 15 and 20 minutes
7. Finish with a discussion about what the experiment teaches us about our teeth and what they can do to limit the impact of acids on their teeth

***Pro Tip:** Vinegar will give you a great (and fast) “wow” moment but for a more relatable example, set up a cup with soda and leave it over night.

Key Learning Points



1. Acids in sugary foods and drinks can wear away tooth enamel
2. Limiting those foods and brushing twice a day helps protect enamel
3. Acid erosion is often invisible at first — like the slow changes in chalk



COMIC BOOK CREATION



Create a comic strip about a tooth headed to a dentist checkup — they must get there without developing decay. What enemies and obstacles will they encounter on their journey and how can they avoid or overcome them?

5th Grade

AGES 10-11

The Tween Years

There's a reason they're called the tween years: they really start to enjoy the idea of independence, **but consistency can wobble as schedules get busier and some parents start wondering if brushing is happening at all.**

These lessons lean into context and critical thinking — helping students decode labels, see how changes happen over time, and connect everyday choices to long-term outcomes — so independence doesn't mean guesswork.



SNACK SLEUTHS

This critical thinking exercise will teach them how to interpret food labels and what to look out for, especially in many “healthy” foods.



You will need:

- Sample food packages (juice boxes, cereal boxes, snack bars) or photocopies of nutrition labels
- Highlighters or colored markers (two colors)
- Calculators or scratch paper
- Tooth decay risk chart on [page 40](#)

Instructions:

1. In groups of 2-3, have them examine 3–4 labels
2. They should use one highlighter to highlight the grams of sugar per serving (to help them visualize, divide the total grams of sugars per serving by 4 to get the amount in teaspoons)
3. If pH or acid equivalents are listed, circle those in a different color
4. Use the tooth decay risk chart to classify each item's decay risk
5. For each high-risk item, propose a healthier swap



FLIP THE SCRIPT



Use index cards or small pads to create mini flip books showing the progression of plaque to cavity. Use 3–5 cards per stage:



1. Clean tooth
2. Plaque layer forms, caused by tiny germs that stick to your teeth after you eat
3. The germs in the plaque eat sugar and start to make acid
4. When the acid gets too strong, it starts to wear away the tooth's outer layer. Over time, little holes called white spots appear where the enamel got weak
5. The hole gets bigger and turns into a cavity that a dentist must fix

HISTORY LESSON

Visualize oral health innovations by building a giant timeline showing how people took care of their teeth from ancient times right up to today.



You will need:

- Era info sheets on pages [41](#) and [42](#)
- A long roll of kraft paper
- Markers or colored pencils
- Glue sticks or tape
- Index cards or sticky notes

← HISTORY

FUTURE →

Instructions:

1. Use the materials on pages [41](#) and [42](#) to discuss, as a class, oral care from five periods in history. For each time period, students should jot down a fact, write a question, or draw a small picture on a note card or sticky note
2. Tape the paper along one wall, about waist-height for kids
3. Divide it into six equal segments — write the five time periods across the top and leave the sixth blank
4. Choose 2-3 students to share what they wrote about the earliest time period, then tape it to the timeline
5. Repeat for each time period
6. Fill in the gaps — give all students a chance to add their note cards to the correct zones, or write/draw directly on to the timeline. If a zone looks empty, let volunteers call out ideas to fill it
7. Walk the timeline, reading each zone in order, summarizing the challenges and changes from each era and reflecting on how things have progressed
8. Finally, give each student a final note card or sticky note and ask them to draw or describe their own dental invention for the future.
9. Label the sixth time zone “Future” and have them add their inventions

Key Learning Points



1. Each major invention directly reduced decay and made oral care more effective
2. Shifts in materials (e.g. animal hair) illustrate how technology drives health improvements
3. Scientific understanding grows: early beliefs like “tooth worms” led to us understand how germs really work



TOOTH TRIOS

Using the game cards on pages [43](#) and [44](#), put the cards face down and take it in turns to flip three over. Try to form a correct trio of the type of the tooth, and two corresponding facts.



Incisors: Sharp, chisel-shaped edges that cut and slice food | **Canines:** Pointed, fang-like shaped for tearing and grasping food | **Premolars:** Flat surfaces that crush and shred food | **Molars:** Large, ridged chewing surfaces that grind and pulverize food

6th Grade

AGES 11-12

From Routine to Reason

Sixth graders are ready to apply what they know without step-by-step adult help, but **they are also among the least likely to brush twice a day.**

This section invites them to test ideas, interpret simple data, and explain the “why” behind habits — bridging from family-guided routines to self-managed ones as parental involvement gets comfortable in the back seat.



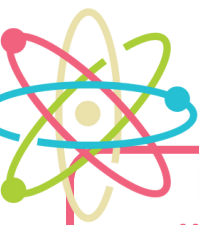
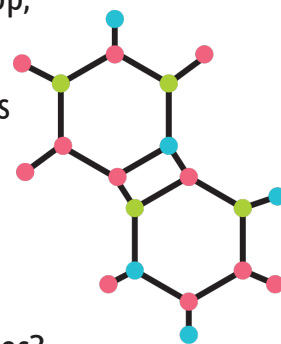
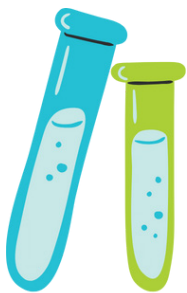
THE ACID LAB

Measure how acidic drinks affect mouth pH and observe saliva in action as it works to protect our teeth.



Instructions:

1. In small groups, have the students use pH testing strips to test and record the pH of water, juice and soda
2. Use the pH recording chart on [page 45](#) to identify if the drinks' pH levels are enamel-safe (pH of 5.5 or higher)
3. Then, using clear cups, have them each test and record the pH of their saliva three times:
 - Before they drink anything (pH should be near neutral (~6.5–7.5))
 - Immediately after rinsing for 30 seconds with a drink (pH should drop, likely below the enamel-safe threshold)
 - Two minutes later — pH should climb back up (e.g., 6–7), showing saliva's buffers at work
4. Reflect and Discuss:
 - Which drinks were below the enamel-safe threshold (pH < 5.5)?
 - How much did saliva pH change after drinking and again after two minutes?
 - How might drinking water after acidic beverages help protect teeth?



INGREDIENT INVESTIGATION

Understand the science behind modern toothpastes.

Have pairs review major ingredient categories (abrasives, fluoride, humectants, detergents) on toothpaste packaging and match them to the guide on [pages 46 and 47](#).





DENTAL DEBATE

Debate oral-health-based topics such as “Should soda be banned in schools?” “Is gum good or bad?” “Do electric toothbrushes work better than manual brushes?” “Are sugar-free snacks always better for your teeth?” “Is it fair for schools to ban candy but allow fruit snacks?”



THE DENTIST WILL SEE YOU NOW

Encourage critical thinking about prevention vs. intervention, build communication skills and reinforce oral-care vocabulary with this role-play game that forces students to interpret real data, not just play dentist.



You will need:

- **For your dentists:** Prompt questions from [page 47](#) and the diagnoses chart from [page 48](#)
- **For your patients:** A set of patient records from [pages 49-50](#) (each set of records includes one tooth chart and one page of notes)
- Optional: Dentist props such as disposable gloves and face masks to add a layer of humor

Instructions:

1. Divide the class into pairs and assign them the roles of Dentist and Patient (they will switch later)
2. Provide each Dentist with the Prompt questions from [page 47](#) and the diagnoses chart from [page](#)

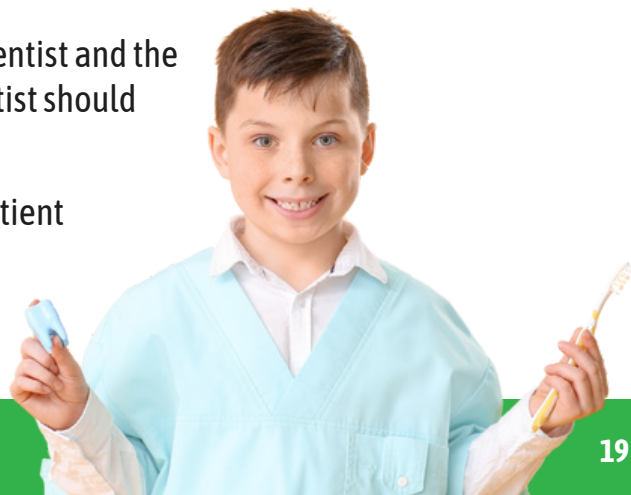
Key Learning Points



1. Some fixes are simple (e.g. flossing) but some are more involved (e.g. fillings, sealants), and each is recommended based on what the exam shows
2. Patient communication is a key part of the exam — it helps dentists provide the correct care
3. All teeth — molars, premolars, canines, and incisors — need individual attention when brushing and flossing

[48](#), and each patient with a set of patient records from [pages 49 and 50](#)

3. The patient must hand the tooth chart to their dentist, then the two will discuss their symptoms
4. The dentist must use the diagnoses chart and the patient’s symptoms to **identify the problem**
5. The dentist must then ask the patient questions to try and **establish the cause** of the problem. The patient will use the information their patient notes card to answer them
6. Once a diagnosis and a cause have been identified, the dentist and the patient should discuss together what **treatments** the dentist should provide and what the patient should do at home
7. Have them switch roles — make sure you give the new patient a new set of records



7th Grade

AGES 12-13

Peer Power

Seventh graders are primed for “real-world” thinking: designing fair surveys, spotting patterns in class data and turning findings into messages.

These projects channel growing voice and agency — students measure what’s happening among their peers, then translate insights into clear, persuasive health communication.



DENTAL FUTURES

Practice research, design, presentation and communication skills as they showcase diverse roles in dentistry at this mock career fair.

1. Each student should choose one role (e.g., dentist, hygienist, lab tech, orthodontist)
2. They should research all aspects of the career: What is the purpose of the role? What are the education and qualification requirements? What are the daily tasks?
3. Using poster board or tri-fold display, they should create a booth full of images and fun facts that displays the information and promotes their chosen career



4. Use the booths to create a fair — students should circulate and ask at least one question per booth. You could even open it up to lower grades to learn from their older peers

5. After the exercise, discuss which profession they would choose

SMILE STATS

Combine basic statistics with oral health as they write, conduct and analyze a peer-to-peer survey.

Have small groups write 5–10 questions about oral health habits (e.g., “How many times a day do you brush?” “Do you floss daily?”), survey their classmates then analyze the data and calculate basic percentages (e.g., 40% of the class flosses daily). Have each group report their key findings and one recommendation for their classmates.



Key Learning Points



1. Dentists, hygienists, assistants, lab techs, orthodontists and more all have different roles within a dental practice
2. Each has their own training path
3. Each plays an important role in prevention and patient communication — not just procedures



LIKE, SHARE, FLOSS

Get them to think beyond pretty pictures into real strategy and the role of social media in public health.

This four-stage social media planning activity can be done individually or in small groups. Consider using an online tool such as Canva where students can select from plug and play templates without compromising their own creativity.



1: PRE-PLANNING AND RESEARCH

- What problem are they trying to solve and whose problem is it?** E.g. “Adults aren’t visiting the dentist enough”
- Campaign goal — what do they want their audience to do more or less of?**
A habit or behavior change such as flossing more? Or an action such as making a dentist appointment or visiting a certain website?

1 3

- Who is in their audience and what do they know about them?** Age range? Interests? What platforms do they use? (e.g. Instagram vs. TikTok vs. Facebook)

2: CAMPAIGN PLANNING

- Do a quick competitive scan of similar health campaigns.** What do they like about them? What worked?
- Define the core message** E.g. “Dentist visits can be fun,” and create a concise slogan or hashtag to communicate it
- Find stats or facts to support their message** such as “Kids who only drink one soda a week are less likely to ...”. They could use data they collected from their community survey or what is publicly available
- Define their social channels and calls-to-action (CTAs).** What do they want their audience to do (e.g. “Tag a friend who needs to floss!” “Click the link to ...”)?



3: CAMPAIGN CREATION

- Create a planning document (spreadsheets work great) to capture the plan for 3–5 posts:**
 - Platform e.g. TikTok
 - Format e.g. single image, short video
 - Specs and best practices
 - Visual concept: sketch or short description e.g. “Close-up of smiling kid”
 - Tone of voice e.g. authoritative or playful
 - Caption
 - Links, hashtags & mentions
 - Alt-text descriptions
 - Metrics to track e.g. likes, comments, shares

- Design time!**

4: PITCH & FEEDBACK

- Campaign overview:**
Explain the theme, objective, target audience and chosen platforms
- Post-by-post walkthrough:**
Show each mock-up, read the caption and explain any CTAs & hashtags
- Explain** how this ties back to pre-planning and research and why it will resonate
- Open for peer feedback**



LIGHTS, CAMERA, PSA

Script, film, and edit a 60-second oral health public service announcement about an oral health issue*

*Record or share student images only with consent and per district policy.



8th Grade

AGES 13-14

Debate, Create, Advocate

By eighth grade, students can weigh trade-offs and evidence

like informed citizens: budgeting preventive vs. reactive care, debating oral-systemic links with sources, crafting PSAs and writing advocacy letters.

The emphasis shifts from “what to do” to “how to decide” — evaluating costs, benefits, and credible evidence while communicating respectfully and effectively.



CULTURE CLUB

You will need:

- Sterile swabs
- Pre-poured agar plates
- Markers
- Gloves
- Goggles
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Water

In this mini lab experiment, they'll visualize hygiene's impact on their mouths by observing oral-microbe growth pre- and post-brushing.

Instructions:

1. Label one plate “before” and the other “after.” Add the date and a name to each
2. Use a sterile swab to swab inner cheek or the bristles of a used toothbrush
3. Lift lid on the “before” plate slightly and make a zig-zag streak once across the agar
4. Close it, tape it and turn it so the agar side is up
5. Brush teeth for 2 minutes; rinse; wait 3 minutes
6. After 3 minutes, use a new swab and repeat steps 2-5 using the “after” plate
7. You should then store the sealed plates at room temp for 24–48 hrs
8. After incubation, compare the bacteria colonies before vs. after: How many more or less are there? What is their appearance?



Keep gloves and goggles on at all times

Keep plates agar-side down until streaking

Observe plates through sealed lids

Spray sealed plates with 10% bleach

Discard per school policy

THE ULTIMATE DEBATE

The acid test of their oral health literacy!

Using scientific articles or trusted websites, teams should gather 3–5 evidence-based sources on mouth–body health relationship topics such as the links between gum disease and heart health. They should consider what research proves vs. what it suggests, and use critical thinking to judge how strong and applicable each source really is. The class should vote on the strongest arguments while you highlight their uses of credible evidence.



USE YOUR VOICE

Translate oral-health knowledge into civic action by writing to persuade school/ community leaders or local government to support oral health initiatives (e.g., water bottle refill stations, free dental screenings).



BUDGETING FOR A HEALTHY SMILE

Using real-world scenarios, students will hone their financial literacy and understanding of health economics and reinforce the importance of preventive oral care — both at the dentist's office and at home.



Unbeknownst to them, **all pairs will have the same treatment needs** but different insurance coverage and at-home oral-care routines. This demonstrates how circumstances and personal habits **both** drive health outcomes and costs.

You will need:

- Price list and scenario cards from [pages 52-54](#)
- A spreadsheet program or calculators, scratch paper and pens

1: CONTEXT

- Explain preventive vs. reactive/emergency care
- Discuss how insurance is just one way people share healthcare costs — some use it, some pay out-of-pocket, and others use low-cost clinics or payment plans

2: SCENARIO ASSIGNMENT

Split the class into pairs and give each pair a scenario card. Students note their:

- Insurance type (or none)
- Preventive schedule
- Reactive/emergency treatment needs

3. CALCULATIONS

Using the price lists and their scenario cards, each group:

- Calculates the costs of their preventive treatments
- Calculates the costs of their reactive or emergency treatments
- Adjusts the costs according to their insurance coverage

4. REVEAL & PRESENTATION

Announce that everyone had identical treatment needs, so cost differences reflect only insurance and at-home habits. Each team then shares:

- Their insurance and at-home oral care scenarios
- The net difference between their preventive and reactive costs (this will have been affected by their at-home routines)
- How their payment method (insurance/no insurance/other resources) affected totals

5. CLASS DISCUSSION

- Which factor had the greatest effect on out-of-pocket cost?
- What community/school resources could help those without coverage?
- What commitments can they make now to safeguard their future health?

Key Learning Points



1. Appreciation for diverse care-access paths and community resources
2. Preventive care generally costs less than reactive treatment
3. Even without insurance, strong daily habits can reduce expenses

Costs shown are illustrative estimates; coverage varies. Informational, not advice.



Standards Alignment Matrix

This table maps each activity to the National Health Education Standards (NHES 1–8) and is designed to support the intent of the Kansas Health Education Standards (2018). Use it to plan, differentiate and document how lessons build knowledge, decision-making and communication about oral health.

National Health Education Standards

Standard 1: Knowledge

Standard 2: Influences

Standard 3: Using credible info/products/services

Standard 4: Communication

Standard 5: Decision-making

Standard 6: Goal-setting

Standard 7: Health/safety practices

Standard 8: Advocacy

Activity	Standards (KS S1–S8 / NHES 1–8)
Kindergarten — Song and Dance	S1, S7
Kindergarten — Tooth Puppets	S1, S4, S7
Kindergarten — Plaque Painting	S1, S7
Kindergarten — Floss Like a Boss	S1, S7
Grade 1 — Grocery Dash	S2, S3, S5
Grade 1 — Brush Beat Freeze	S1, S7
Grade 1 — Tooth Defenders Assemble	S1, S7
Grade 1 — Eggsperiment	S1, S7
Grade 1 — Toothpaste Test	S1, S3, S5
Grade 2 — Teeth Timeline	S1, S3
Grade 2 — A Spoonful of Sugar ... or Six	S2, S3, S5
Grade 2 — Tooth Diary	S1, S6, S7
Grade 2 — Smile Collage	S2, S4
Grade 2 — Tooth-Type Two-Step	S1
Grade 3 — Brush Baton Relay	S4, S6, S7
Grade 3 — Ad Break	S2, S3, S4
Grade 3 — Dental Detectives	S3, S4, S5
Grade 3 — Tooth Trivia	S1

Grade 4 — Snack Planner	S2, S3, S5
Grade 4 — Game Time	S1, S5
Grade 4 — Acid vs. Enamel	S1, S5
Grade 4 — Comic Book Creation	S1, S4
Grade 5 — Snack Sleuths	S2, S3, S5
Grade 5 — Flip the Script	S2, S3, S4
Grade 5 — History Lesson	S1, S2, S3
Grade 5 — Tooth Trios	S1
Grade 6 — The Acid Lab	S1, S3, S5
Grade 6 — Ingredient Investigation	S1, S3
Grade 6 — Dental Debate	S1, S3, S4, S5
Grade 6 — The Dentist Will See You Now	S3, S4, S5
Grade 7 — Dental Futures	S3, S4, S6
Grade 7 — Smile Stats	S2, S3, S5
Grade 7 — Like, Share, Floss	S2, S3, S4, S8
Grade 7 — Lights, Camera, PSA	S3, S4, S8
Grade 8 — The Ultimate Debate	S1, S3, S4, S5
Grade 8 — Culture Club	S1, S3, S7
Grade 8 — Use Your Voice	S3, S4, S8
Grade 8 — Budgeting for a Healthy Smile	S3, S5, S6

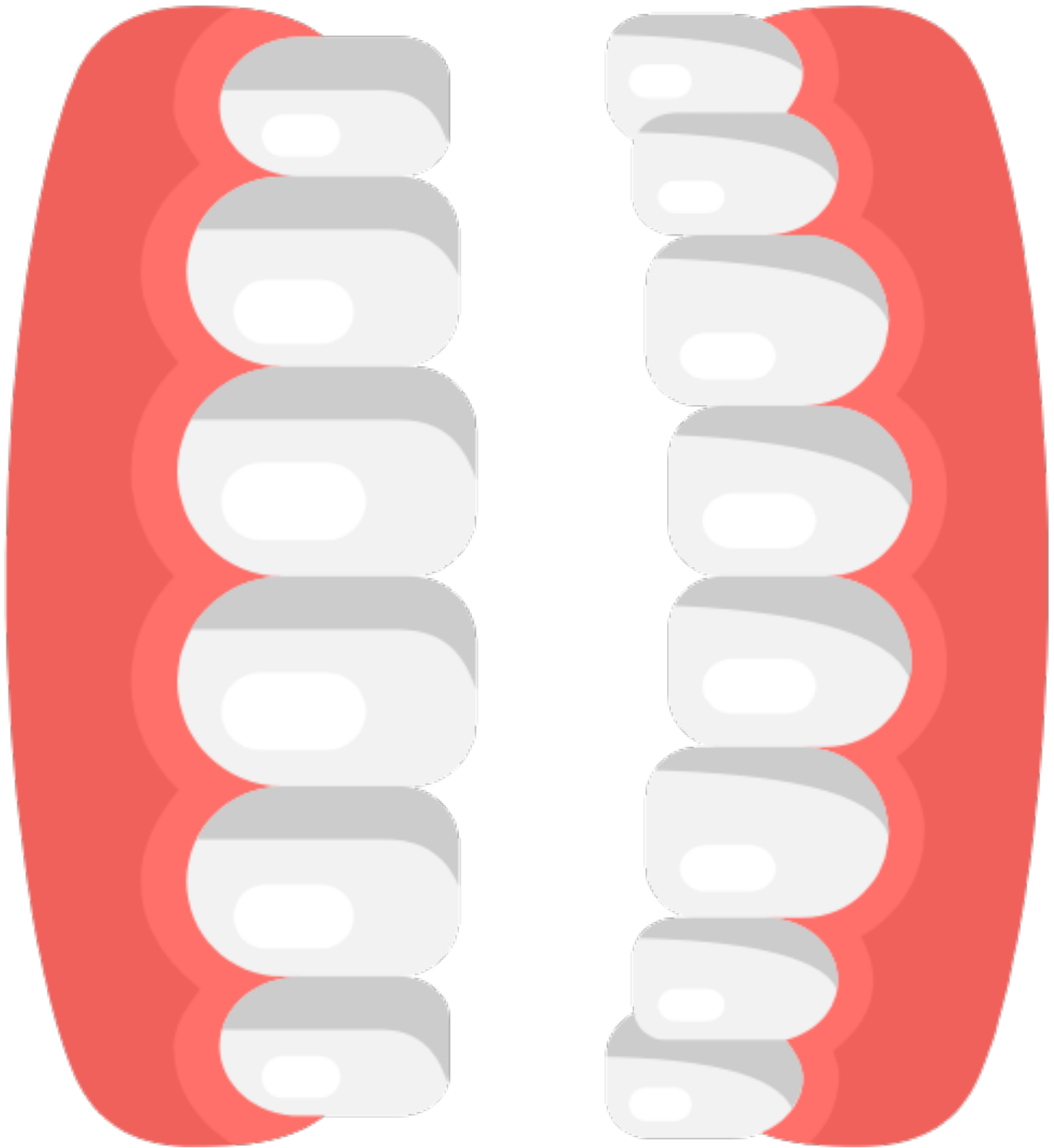
This matrix reflects an internal review of lesson objectives and student tasks, and Kansas and National Health Education Standards. It indicates intended support/alignment, not credit or accreditation. Educators should verify fit with local pacing and outcomes.



TOOTH PUPPETS



PLAQUE PAINTING



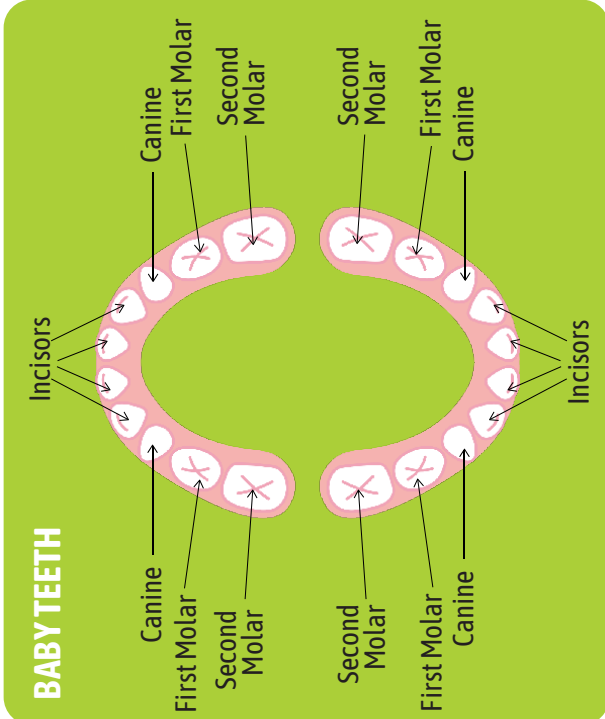
GROCERY DASH





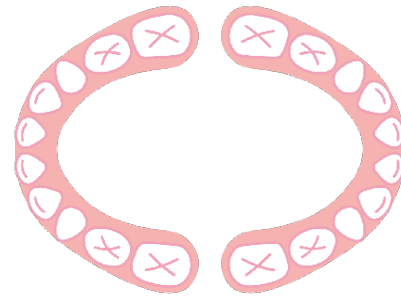
TEETH TIMELINE

Use the diagrams in the green boxes to identify which teeth to color in on each mouth. Use one color for baby teeth and a different color for permanent teeth.



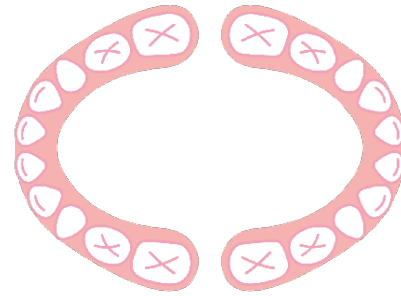
6 MONTHS

1 baby incisor



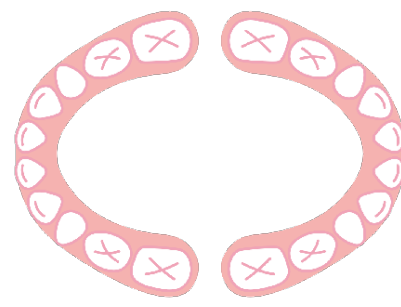
13 MONTHS

2 baby incisors
1 baby first molar



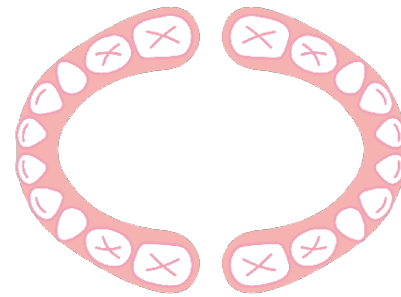
16 MONTHS

3 baby incisors | 2 baby first molars | 1 baby canine



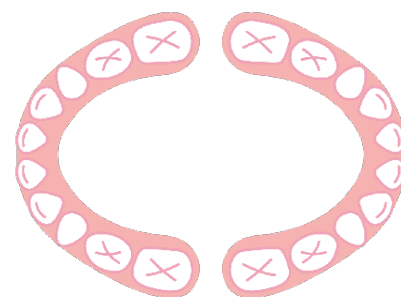
23 MONTHS

3 baby incisors | 3 baby first molars | 2 baby canines | 1 baby second molar



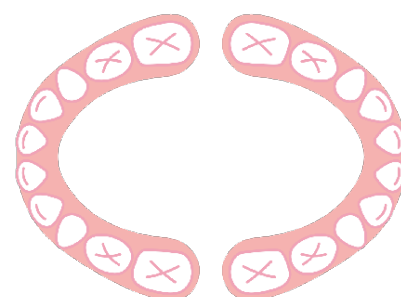
3 YEARS

20 BABY TEETH:
8 incisors | 4 first molars | 4 canines | 4 second molars



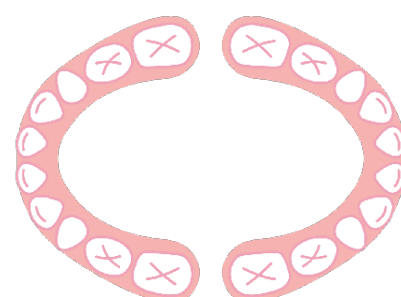
6 YEARS

7 baby incisors | 4 baby first molars | 4 baby canines | 4 baby second molars



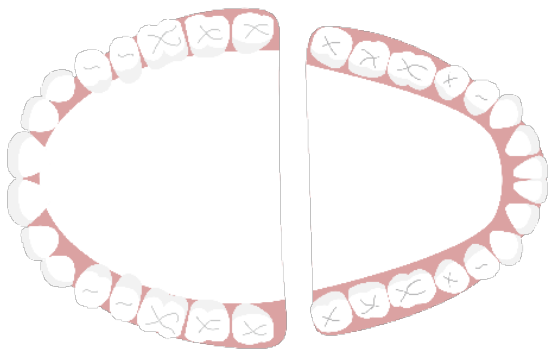
8 YEARS

0 baby incisors | 4 baby first molars | 4 baby canines | 4 baby second molars



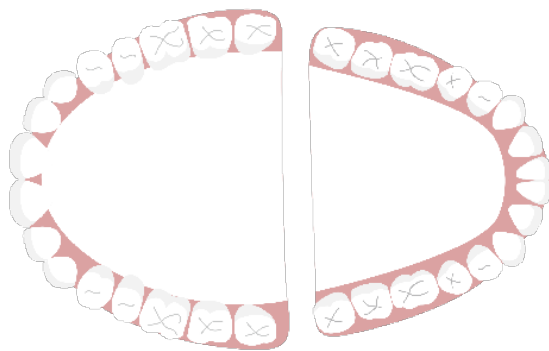
9 YEARS

8 permanent incisors | 0 premolars |
3 baby first molars | 4 baby canines | 4
baby second molars



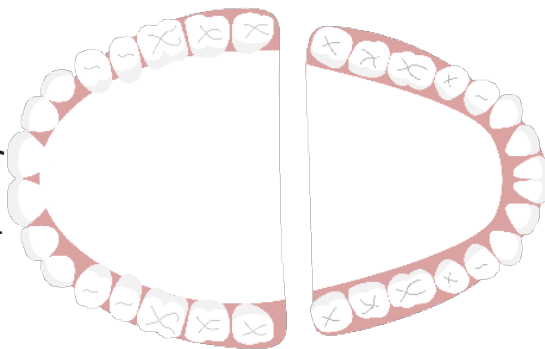
10 YEARS

8 permanent incisors | 1 premolar |
1 baby first molar | 2 baby canines | 2
baby second molars



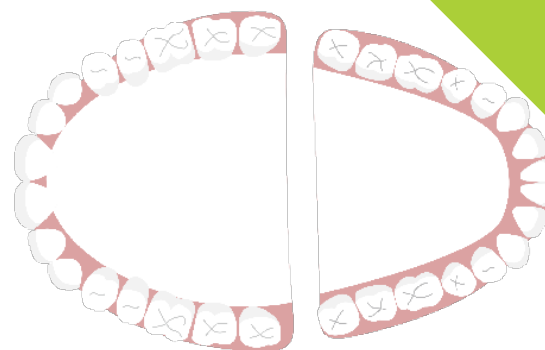
11 YEARS

8 permanent incisors | 4 premolars
| 4 permanent canines | 4 permanent
first molars | 1 baby second molar

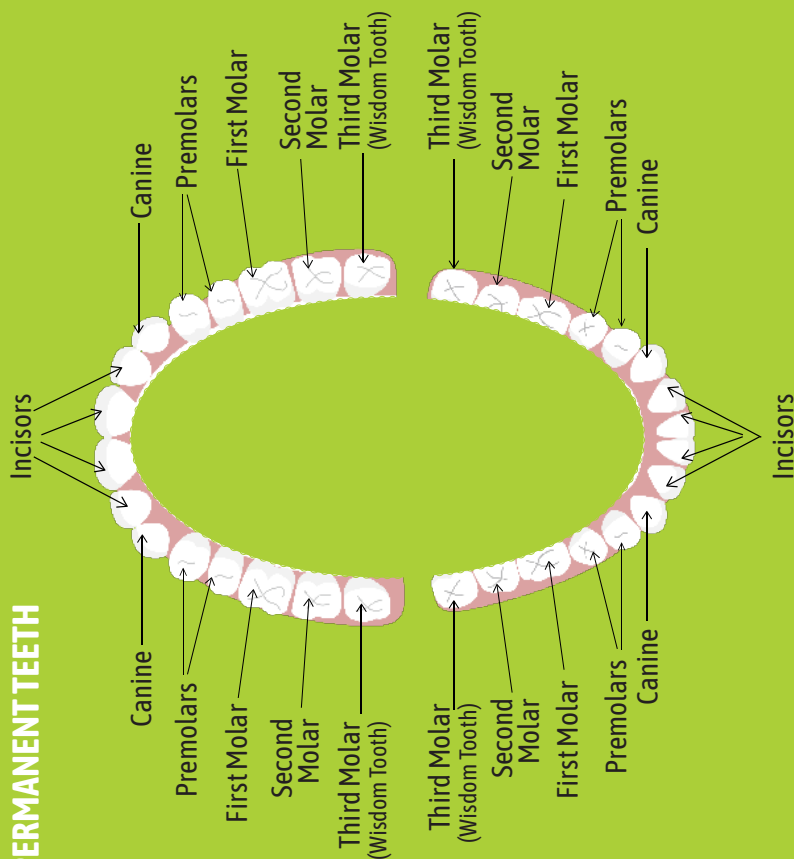


13 YEARS

28 PERMANENT TEETH:
8 incisors | 4 premolars | 4 canines |
4 first molars | 4 second molars



PERMANENT TEETH



2ND

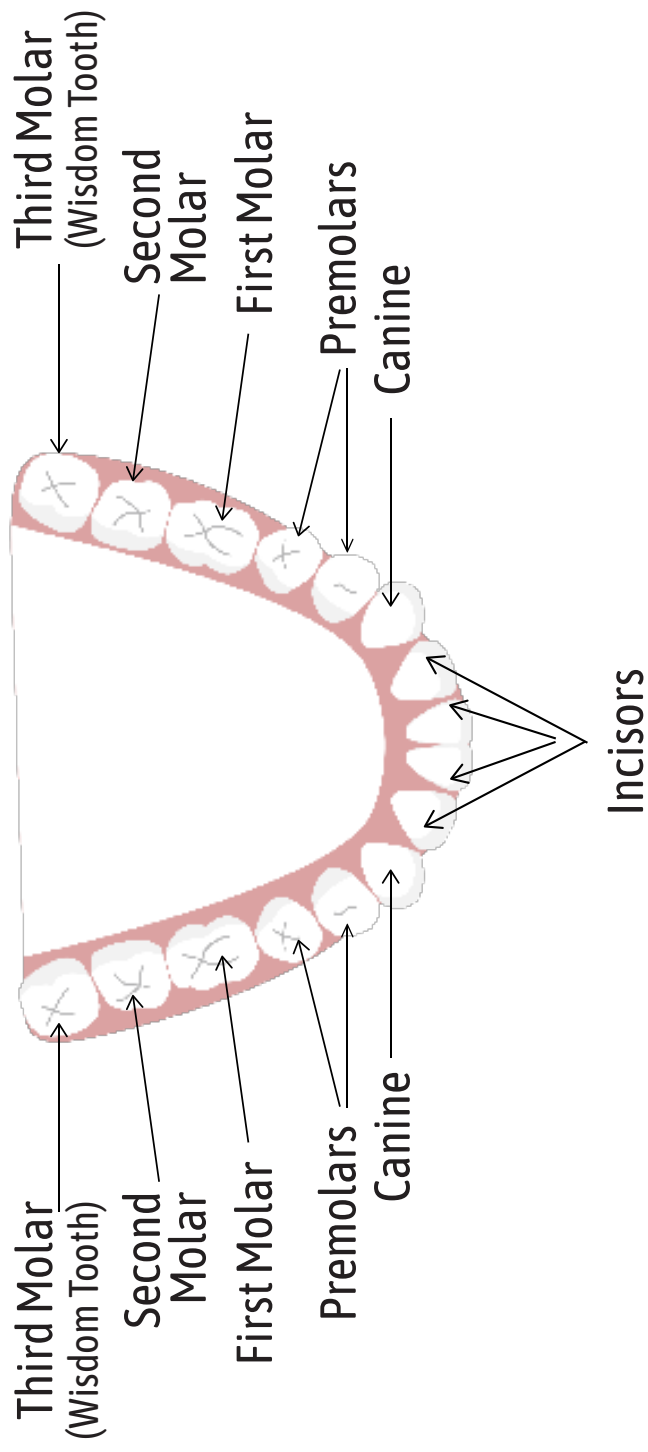
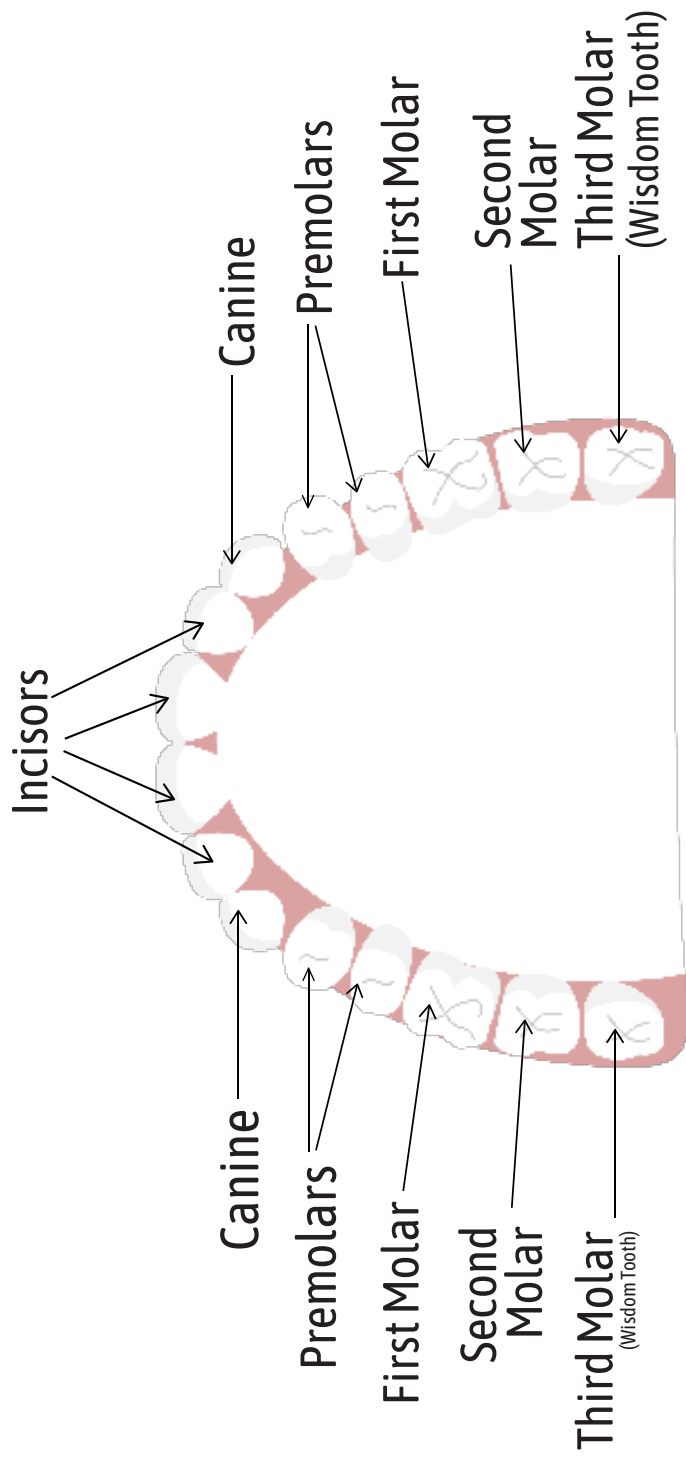
TOOTH DIARY

Add a checkmark for every time you brush or floss

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY



BRUSH BATON RELAY



SCENARIO 1: THE CASE OF THE ZINGY TOOTH

Problem: Student A says their tooth hurts when they drink something cold

Clue #1: Their backpack has candy wrappers stuffed in the side pockets

Clue #2: They are always too tired to do anything after their bedtime video games

Clue #3: They say the pain is a “zingy” feeling

Scenario 1: Answers for Teachers

Problem: Cavity

Causes:

- Too much sugar
- Not brushing at night

Solutions:

- Visit the dentist
- Brush twice daily
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks

SCENARIO 2: THE CASE OF THE SMELLY BREATH

Problem: Student B’s breath smells bad

Clue #1: They brush their teeth but never spend more than 20 seconds

Clue #2: There’s a tiny piece of apple stuck between their molars from last week’s lunch

Clue #3: They don’t remember when they last went to the dentist

Scenario 2: Answers for Teachers

Problem: Bacteria buildup causing bad breath

Cause: Incomplete oral hygiene

Solutions:

- Brush for two minutes, twice a day
- Floss daily
- Visit a dentist

DENTAL DETECTIVES

SCENARIO 3: THE CASE OF THE WIGGLY TOOTH

Problem: Student C's tooth keeps moving

Clue #1: They just turned 8 and still have some baby teeth

Clue #2: At recess, they were showing a friend how far the tooth can move back and forth

Clue #3: The last time this happened, the tooth fell out and a new one grew in its place

Scenario 3: Answers for Teachers

Problem: No problem, just normal baby tooth loss

Cause:

- Natural growth as adult teeth come in

Solution:

- Reassure them; the adult tooth is ready to replace the baby tooth

SCENARIO 4: THE CASE OF THE RED GUMS

Problem: Student D's gums are red and sore

Clue #1: Their toothbrush bristles are bent and frayed

Clue #2: They admit they never floss

Clue #3: They notice something pink in the sink after brushing

Scenario 4: Answers for Teachers

Problem: Early gum disease (gingivitis)

Cause: Poor brushing and no flossing

Solutions:

- Floss
- Replace toothbrush
- Brush more gently but thoroughly

TOOTH TRIVIA

1. How many baby teeth do kids have (once they have all grown in, usually around 3 years old)?

Answer: 20

2. What is the hard substance on the outside of our teeth called?

Answer: Tooth enamel

3. How often should you brush?

Answer: Twice a day

4. How long should you brush each time?

Answer: 2 minutes

5. What should you do to clean between your teeth?

Answer: Floss

6. The sticky film of germs on teeth is called ...

Answer: Plaque

7. Mouth germs make acid from what we eat — mostly from ...

Answer: Sugar

8. What is the best everyday drink for teeth?

Answer: Water

9. Which snack is kinder to teeth: cheese or sticky candy?

Answer: Cheese

10. True or False: You should scrub hard to clean teeth.

Answer: False — use small, gentle circles

ONE-DAY MEAL PLAN

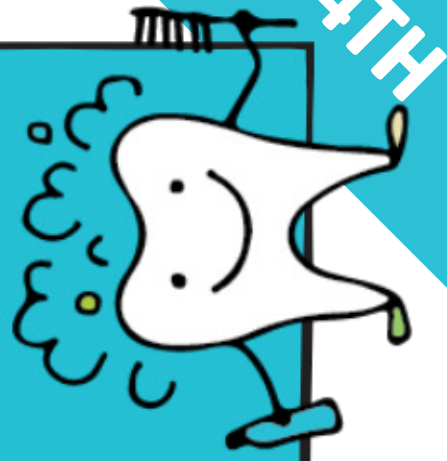
BREAKFAST

LUNCH

DINNER

SNACKS

DRINKS



4TH

1. Plan Your Game Board (10–15 minutes)

- Choose a path shape: Straight? Spiral? Zigzag? Smile?
- Decide on a theme: e.g. "Journey to a Cavity-Free Mouth" or "Escape the Sugar Monster!"
- What is the object of the game? What (or who) are the obstacles?

2. Add Game Actions (20 minutes)

- Draw a start space and a finish space
- Add 20–30 spaces to connect them
- Make some spaces helpful and others tricky, based on real-life dental choices such as:
 - “Brushed twice today! Move forward 2 spaces”
 - “Forgot to brush after candy. Lose a turn”
 - “Drank water instead of soda. Move forward!”
 - “Skipped flossing. Go back 1 space”
- Make some space Question or Challenge spaces — create 10–15 cards with trivia, true/false, or mini challenges. Examples:
 - “What mineral makes teeth strong?” (Answer: Fluoride)
 - “Act out brushing your teeth. If your team guesses it, move ahead!”

4. Decorate Your Board

- Use colors, doodles, stickers, whatever you want!
- Don’t forget to create your game pieces!

5. Play the Game! (15–20 minutes)

Bonus Challenge: Add Tooth Tokens to collect when players make good choices. Whoever has the healthiest habits and finishes the game with the most tokens wins.

ACID VS. ENAMEL

	Prediction	Observations after 5 minutes	Observations after 10 minutes	Observations after 15 minutes	Observations after 20 minutes
WATER					
VINEGAR					

TOOTH-DECAY RISK CHART (Student Handout)

How to use

1. Find the total sugars and serving size on the label
2. Calculate the base risk level based on sugars per serving: **<5g = Low; 6-15g = Medium; >15g = High**
3. Check any “extras” that make it riskier:
 - **ACIDIC.** Is acid listed high in the ingredients list? Is it a soda or fruity drink?
 - **STICKY.** Is it chewy/gummy/caramel-like? Or does it turn into a pasty mash that lodges in teeth (e.g. pretzels). *Starchy foods that turn pasty (e.g., crackers, pretzels) can ‘stick’ even without sugar*
 - **LONG-SIPPING.** Is it a drink (other than water) that takes more than 15 minutes to finish, e.g. a sports drink nursed throughout a training session? *Saliva needs time to neutralize acids so every new sip resets the clock, keeping enamel in the danger zone longer*
4. Bump UP ONE LEVEL for each box checked
5. Calculate the overall risk level

SNACK SLEUTHS

[illegible]

HISTORY LESSON

1. ANCIENT & CLASSICAL PERIODS (c. 3000 BC/BCE–500 AD/CE)

People cleaned teeth with chew sticks (twigs with soft, brushy ends) and simple tooth powders made from ash, crushed shells, or charcoal. Many believed a tiny “tooth-worm” caused pain and holes, and treatments often relied on herbs or charms.

Early problem-solving still happened: craftspeople used beeswax to fill cracks and, in some places, gold wire to hold loose teeth together. These ideas were clever for their time, but people didn’t yet know about germs or acids.

Main Takeaway: *Early people cared about clean mouths, but without real science they guessed at causes — and sometimes guessed wrong.*

2. THE MIDDLE AGES TO EARLY RENAISSANCE (500–1700)

Tooth care was often done by barber-surgeons, who could pull painful teeth. Home cures and herbal rinses were common. In China, the first true bristle toothbrushes (animal hair on a handle) appeared and slowly spread to other parts of the world.

At the same time, sugar became more common in many diets. More sugar meant more cavities, even though people were brushing more than before. Myths about tooth-worms and “bad air” still hung around.

Main Takeaway: *Tools improved, but without lab science people didn’t understand why teeth decayed — and sugar quietly made things worse.*

3. ENLIGHTENMENT & THE BIRTH OF SCIENTIFIC DENTISTRY (1700–1820s)

Dentists began using careful exams, organized instruments, and early fillings and braces. A famous French dentist, Pierre Fauchard (1728), explained that cavities (he called them caries) were a preventable disease and not caused by worms or magic.

Dentistry started to look like a modern profession: keep teeth clean, fix small problems early, and teach people how to care for their mouths.

Main Takeaway: *Knowledge replaced superstition — prevention and patient education entered the dental toolkit.*

4. THE INDUSTRIAL AGE & GERM THEORY (1820s–1900)

New technology changed everything. Anesthesia (like nitrous oxide and ether) made treatment safer and less painful. Dentures became easier to make with vulcanized rubber. Toothpaste in tubes and mass made toothbrushes reached more families.

Scientists discovered germs and showed that mouth bacteria + sugar → acid, which softens enamel. After X-rays (1895) arrived, dentists could finally see inside a tooth.

Main Takeaway: *Science connected sugar, bacteria, and acid to decay, and inventions made modern dental care possible.*

5. THE PREVENTIVE & DIGITAL ERA (1900–TODAY)

Prevention took center stage. Fluoride in toothpaste helps re-harden enamel. Sealants protect the deep grooves in molars. Brushing two minutes, twice a day and cleaning between teeth became the everyday plan.

Materials and tech improved: nylon and electric brushes, tooth-colored composite fillings, implants, clear aligners and fast digital X-rays/CAD-CAM crowns. Infection control also became standard in every office.

Main Takeaway: *With smart habits, regular checkups and today's tools, teeth can last a lifetime.*

TOOTH TRIOS

MOLARS**GRIND AND
PULVERIZE
FOOD****MOLARS****ADULTS HAVE
8, SOMETIMES
12****LARGE,
RIDGED
CHEWING
SURFACES****INCISORS****CUT AND
SLICE FOOD****INCISORS****EVERYONE
HAS 8****SHARP,
CHISEL-
SHAPED
EDGES**

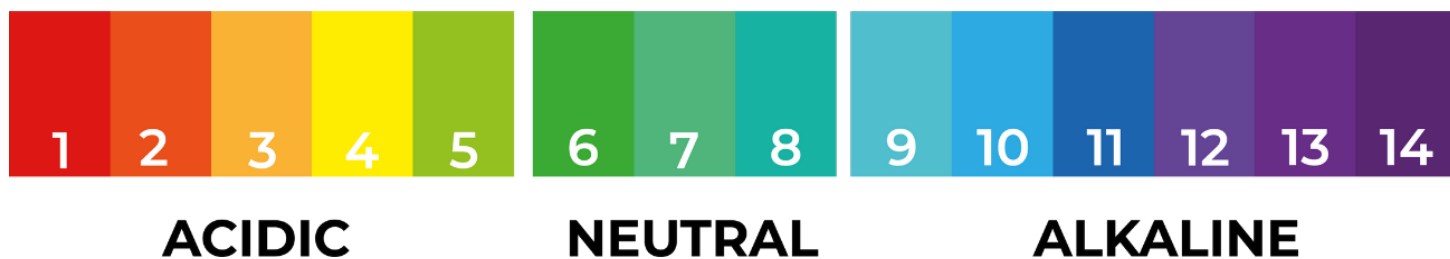
PREMOLARS	CRUSH AND SHRED FOOD	
PREMOLARS	START TO APPEAR AROUND 10 YEARS OLD	BROAD, FLAT SURFACES
CANINES	TEAR AND GRASP FOOD	
CANINES	EVERYONE HAS 4	POINTED, FANG-LIKE SHAPE

THE ACID LAB

DRINK	pH LEVEL	ENAMEL-SAFE?	SALIVA pH BEFORE DRINKING	SALIVA pH IMMEDIATELY AFTER	SALIVA pH TWO MINUTES AFTER

pH SCALE

5.5 AND ABOVE = ENAMEL-SAFE



INGREDIENT INVESTIGATION

INGREDIENT CATEGORY	COMMON NAMES YOU'LL SEE ON TUBES	FUNCTION
Fluoride (active)	Sodium fluoride; Stannous fluoride; Sodium monofluorophosphate	Strengthens enamel; helps prevent cavities
Desensitizers	Potassium nitrate; Stannous fluoride; Arginine	Reduces sensitivity by calming nerves or sealing tiny tubules
Abrasives	Hydrated silica; Calcium carbonate; Dicalcium phosphate dihydrate	Polishes stains; helps remove plaque
Detergents (foam)	Sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS); Sodium lauroyl sarcosinate; Cocamidopropyl betaine	Spreads paste; loosens debris; creates foam
Humectants	Glycerin; Sorbitol; Propylene glycol	Keeps paste moist; prevents drying out
Binders/Thickeners	Cellulose gum; Xanthan gum; Carrageenan; Carbomer	Keeps texture smooth; holds ingredients together
Flavors/Sweeteners	Peppermint oil; Menthol; Saccharin; Xylitol	Adds flavor/smell; xylitol may help fight cavity bacteria
Tartar control	Zinc citrate; Zinc chloride; Pyrophosphates (e.g., tetrasodium, disodium)	Helps reduce tartar (calculus) buildup

INGREDIENT CATEGORY	COMMON NAMES YOU'LL SEE ON TUBES	FUNCTION
Whitening aids	Hydrogen peroxide; Carbamide peroxide; Blue covarine; Sodium bicarbonate (baking soda)	Lightens or lifts stains; optical whitening; mild bleaching
Antimicrobials/Breath	Cetylpyridinium chloride (CPC); Zinc compounds; Essential oils	Reduces certain bacteria; freshens breath
Remineralizing (non-fluoride)	Nano-hydroxyapatite; Calcium sodium phosphosilicate (NovaMin)	Helps repair enamel micro-defects; supports remineralization
Dyes/Colorants	Titanium dioxide; CI/FD&C dyes	Provides color/whiteness to the paste
Preservatives	Sodium benzoate; Benzoic acid; Parabens	Prevents microbial growth in the tube

THE DENTIST WILL SEE YOU NOW

QUESTIONS FOR “DENTISTS” TO ASK “PATIENTS”

- Where exactly does it hurt? (point with one finger)
- When does it hurt most: sweet, cold, chewing or all the time?
- Do your gums bleed when you brush or floss?
- What do you eat/drink most between meals? Do you sip drinks for a long time?
- How many times a day do you brush? Do you use fluoride toothpaste?
- Do you clean between teeth (floss or picks)? How often?
- Do you brush after acidic drinks like lemonade?

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

THE DENTIST WILL SEE YOU NOW

DIAGNOSES CHART (FOR “DENTISTS”)

CONDITION	SYMPTOMS (What the patient might say)	APPEARANCE (What you might see on the tooth chart)	LIKELY CAUSES	DENTIST TREATMENTS	WHAT THE PATIENT SHOULD DO AT HOME
Early Cavity There is a weak spot in the tooth's enamel and if left untreated, it will develop into a full cavity	"It zings for a few seconds, especially when I drink something cold"	A small brown/black dot with a white chalky spot nearby	- Lots of sugary snacks or drinks - Sticky snacks (not always sweet) - Not brushing quite hard enough	Fluoride treatments and sealants to stop the cavity getting any worse	- Make sure toothpaste has fluoride in it - Brush morning and night for 2 minutes - Less sugary snacking - Floss every day
Cavity The decay has gotten worse and now there is a hole in the tooth	"Sharp pain when chewing" "It aches when I'm trying to sleep"	A visible hole	Same as above but it's gone on longer and now the decay is deeper	A filling. The dentist removes the rotten piece of the tooth and fills it with a new, strong, tooth-colored material that seals the hole so germs and food can't get in.	- Same as above + Schedule dentist visit soon
Gingivitis Gums are swollen and painful	"My gums bleed when I brush/floss"	- Red, puffy gums at the edges - Visible plaque/tartar line at gums	- Not cleaning the gumline - Not flossing much		- Brush at 45° to gums - Floss every day (even if you see a bit of pink in the sink - it should go away after 1-2 weeks)
Acid Erosion. Tooth enamel is not as strong as it should be because it's been eroded by acids	"My teeth feel fuzzy after soda" or "lemonade tingles."	- Smooth, shiny cupped areas - Edges look thin	- Acidic drinks - Long sipping (taking a long time to finish sugary drinks)		- Fewer acidic drinks - Rinse with water after drinking acidic drinks - Wait a while after drinking acidic drinks before brushing - Make sure toothpaste has fluoride in it

THE DENTIST WILL SEE YOU NOW

- PATIENT RECORDS

PATIENT A

PATIENT KEEPS

Your Symptoms:

- Your upper left back tooth hurts with candy and sometimes when you chew
- The pain lasts a few seconds

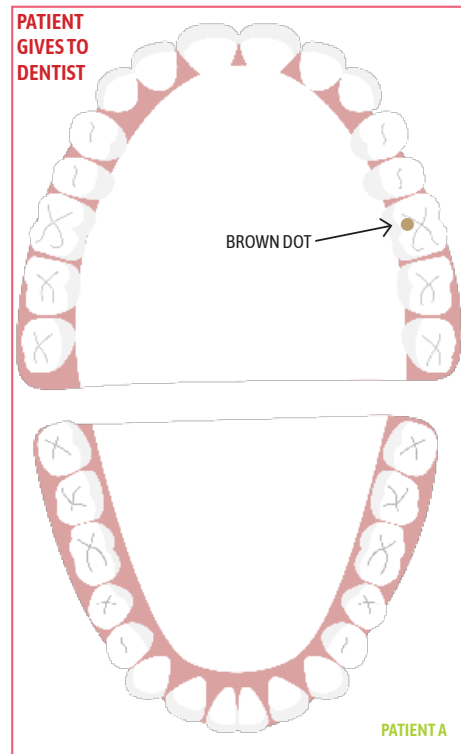
Your Habits:

- You brush most nights but forget in the mornings.
- Your favorite after-school snack is fruit snacks
- You always sip a sports drink during practice

What the Dentist Might Ask You:

- What happens when you drink cold drinks? | Your answer: "It kind of 'zings'"
- Do you take a long time to drink your sports drink? | Your answer: "Yes, I drink it throughout practice"

PATIENT A



PATIENT B

PATIENT KEEPS

Your Symptoms:

- You feel a sharp pain in your upper left back tooth when you chew
- Cold drinks and candy make it sting
- It aches at nighttime

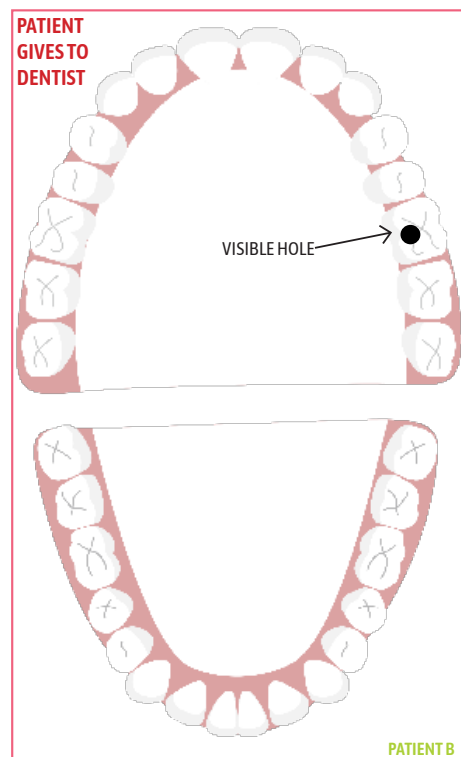
Your Habits:

- You brush most nights but forget in the mornings
- Your favorite after-school snack is fruit snacks
- You always sip a sports drink during practice

What the Dentist Might Ask You:

- What happens when you eat or drink something cold or sweet? | Your answer: "It really hurts"
- How long does the pain last? | Your answer: "About a minute - it feels like a really long time"

PATIENT B



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PATIENT C

PATIENT KEEPS

Your Symptoms:

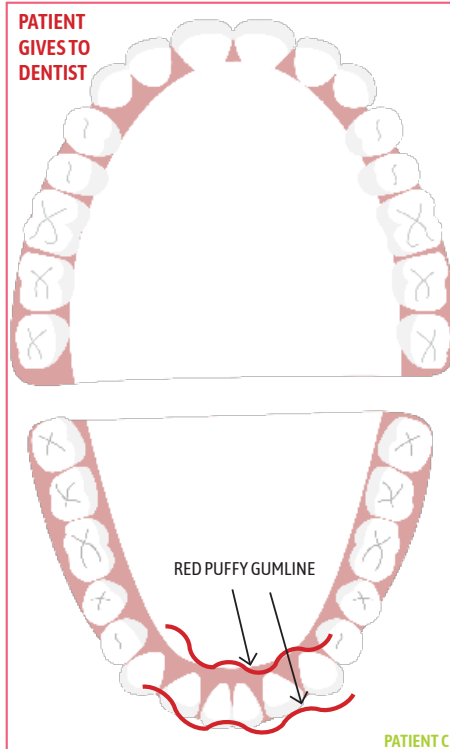
- Your gums bleed when you brush

Your Habits:

- You only brush once a day
- You never floss
- You love chips and crackers

What the Dentist Might Ask You:

- What happens when you drink cold drinks or something sweet? | Your answer: *"Nothing, no pain. Just bleeding"* PATIENT C



PATIENT D

PATIENT KEEPS

Your Symptoms:

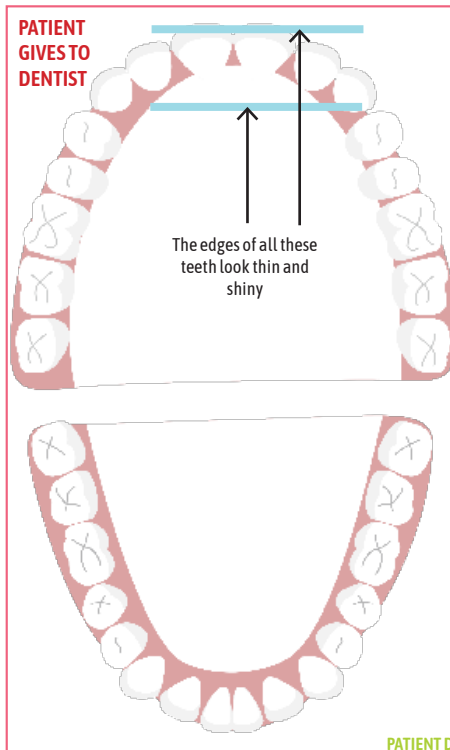
- Your teeth feel "fuzzy" after drinking lemonade

Your Habits:

- You LOVE lemonade and drink it every day throughout lunch
- Sometimes it's diet lemonade

What the Dentist Might Ask You:

- Do you brush after you drink your lemonade? | Your answer: *"Yes, I always brush right after drinking the regular because I know it has a lot of sugar, but not after the diet"* PATIENT D



THE DENTIST WILL SEE YOU NOW - ANSWERS FOR TEACHERS

PATIENT	LIKELY DIAGNOSIS	MAIN CAUSE CLUES	DENTIST TREATMENTS	WHAT THE PATIENT SHOULD DO AT HOME
PATIENT A	Early cavity	- Sweet/cold twinge that stops quickly - Tiny brown dot on a molar groove	Fluoride treatments and sealants to stop the cavity getting any worse	- Make sure toothpaste has fluoride in it - Brush morning and night for 2 minutes - Less sugary snacking - Floss every day
PATIENT B	Deep cavity	- Visible hole - Sweet/cold pain that lingers ≥ 30–60 sec - Chewing pain	A filling. The dentist removes the rotten piece of the tooth and fills it with a new, strong, tooth-colored material that seals the hole so germs and food can't get in.	- Same as above + Schedule dentist visit soon
PATIENT C	Gingivitis	- Red, puffy gumline - Bleeding when brushing/flossing		- Brush at 45° to gums - Floss every day (even if you see a bit of pink in the sink - it should go away after 1-2 weeks)
PATIENT D	Acid erosion	"Fuzzy" teeth after lemonade/soda - Sips acidic drinks over time - Smooth, shiny enamel areas		- Fewer acidic drinks - Rinse with water after drinking acidic drinks - Wait a while after drinking acidic drinks before brushing - Make sure toothpaste has fluoride in it

CATEGORY	SERVICE	EXAMPLE PRICE
Preventive	Routine exam	\$100
Preventive	Cleaning	\$120
Preventive	Bitewing X-rays	\$40
Preventive	Fluoride varnish	\$30
Preventive	Sealant	\$50
Reactive	Emergency exam	\$80
Reactive	Composite filling	\$250

SCENARIO A

Your Insurance Type: Basic Plan

- **Preventive** costs are 100% covered (no cost to you)
- Your **deductible** is \$50 (meaning you must pay for the first \$50 of treatment before your insurance will cover any costs)
- Your **coinsurance** is 50% (meaning you will pay half of everything above \$50 and your insurance company will pay the other half)
- No **copay** (meaning you shouldn't have to pay anything on the day of your visit)

Your Habits:

- You brush twice a day
- You floss most days
- You only drink water with meals and no long sipping

Your Potential Preventive Schedule This Year:

- 2 x routine exams
- 2 x cleanings
- 1 x set of X-rays

Your Potential Reactive/Emergency Treatment Needs This Year:

- 1 x emergency exam
- 1 x composite filling

Educational use only. These prices are illustrative estimates for a classroom exercise, not quotes | No brands or clinics are endorsed |This activity teaches budget math and prevention concepts; it is not medical or financial advice.

SCENARIO B

Your Insurance Type: None. You must pay full price

Your Habits:

- You brush twice a day
- You floss rarely
- You sip through a sports drink during basketball practice

Your Potential Preventive Schedule This Year:

- 2 x routine exams
- 2 x cleanings
- 1 x sealant (optional but recommended)
- 1 x fluoride treatment (optional but recommended because of your long-sipping)

Your Potential Reactive/Emergency Treatment Needs This Year:

- 1 x emergency exam
- 1 x composite filling

SCENARIO C

Your Insurance Type: None. You use community resources where you can and must pay for any costs they don't cover

- You can access a community clinic where there is a \$30 **copay** for any visit (this is a fee you must pay at the time of your visit)
- The clinic offers a **50% discount** off the regular price list
- You can access **free** sealants through your school program

Your Habits:

- You brush twice a day
- You floss sometimes
- You drink a juice box every lunchtime but you drink it quickly

Your Potential Preventive Schedule This Year:

- 2 x routine exams (2 x community clinic visits)
- 2 x cleanings (done during the same visits)
- Sealant through your school
- 1 x set of X-rays

Your Potential Reactive/Emergency Treatment Needs This Year:

- 1 x emergency exam (1 x community clinic visit)
- 1 x composite filling (A separate visit due to your availability)

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Your Insurance Type: Comprehensive Plan

- **Preventive** costs are 100% covered (no cost to you)
- You have no **deductible** (meaning you don't need to pay anything before your insurance will cover any costs)
- Your **coinsurance** is 20% (meaning you will pay 20% of the bill; your insurance company will pay the rest)
- There is a \$20 **copay** for any emergency exams (this is a fee you must pay at the time of your visit)

Your Habits:

- You brush once a day
- You don't floss
- You drink sodas every night as you watch a movie

Your Potential Preventive Schedule This Year:

- 2 x routine exams
- 2 x cleaning
- 1 x fluoride treatment (optional but highly recommended by your dentist)
- 1 x set of X-rays

Your Potential Reactive/Emergency Treatment Needs This Year:

- 1 x emergency exam
- 1 x composite filling

SCENARIO E

Your Insurance Type: None. You must pay full price

Your Habits:

- You brush once a day
- You don't floss
- You eat fruit snacks every day and drink sodas every night as you watch a movie

Your Potential Preventive Schedule This Year:

- 1 x routine exam (you don't have transportation to make it to the second one)
- 1 x cleaning
- 1 x sealant (optional but recommended)
- 1 x set of X-rays

Your Potential Reactive/Emergency Treatment Needs This Year:

- 1 x emergency exam
- 1 x composite filling

THERE IS HELP FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT

There are many reasons a family might not be able to visit a dentist and there are a number of organizations and services that help.

If a service is not listed here, we encourage families to contact the United Way at 2-1-1 where they will be able to connect them with other services across the state.

Need A Lift?

Sometimes the only thing preventing families from visiting a dentist is reliable transportation.

Fortunately, there are options, including:

- **Public Transportation.** If you live in a larger metropolitan area of Kansas, there are a number of transit routes that can help you get to the dentist.
- **Ride Shares.** Transport companies like [Uber](#) and [Lyft](#) are increasingly working with businesses to provide transportation solutions for patients. Check with your dental office if they are registered with either of these or can offer any other transport services.
- **Transport Concierge Services.** Transport concierge services can assist people who do not have a smartphone or cannot access traditional on-demand transport services like Uber and Lyft. [GoGoGrandparent](#) pairs users with an Uber or Lyft driver and vehicle to fit their needs and requests, then communicates, screens and monitors rides on the rider's behalf.
- **Virtual Dental Visits.** Virtual dental visits can help patients access dental care from home for issues that don't require an in-person visit. Talk to your provider to find out if they offer virtual appointments or connect with a licensed dentist using a service such as [Teledentistry.com](#).

Delta Dental Community Benefit Plan (Statewide)

Delta Dental of Kansas has partnered with United Way to fund dental coverage for those who would otherwise not be able to afford it. Call 2-1-1 to ask about the Delta Dental Community Benefit Plan and see if you're eligible.

Finding a Dentist

Finding a dental provider can be tough, especially if you have limited income or no dental insurance.

[Discover helpful options](#), including Safety Net Dental Clinics, KanCare and Kansas Mission of Mercy.

Donated Dental Services

Donated Dental Services volunteers provide comprehensive treatment to eligible patients in Kansas, including veterans. [See if you meet the requirements and apply for help.](#)

Medicaid & Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Medicaid and CHIP provide free or low-cost health coverage for millions of Americans, including low-income people, families and children, pregnant women, elderly people and people with disabilities. [Find out if you qualify.](#)

Kansas Society for Children with Challenges

The Kansas Society for Children with Challenges provides financial assistance for medical services. [See if you meet the requirements and apply for help.](#)

HNC Living Foundation

The HNC Living Foundation helps head and neck cancer patients live life fully, during and after treatment, through support of services including dental care. [See if you meet the requirements and apply for help.](#)

Smile Kits

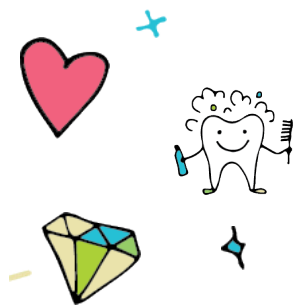
Kansas-based organizations (including schools) can apply for [Smile Kits](#) from Delta Dental of Kansas to support programs and projects that include an oral health education outreach component that benefits Kansans. Smile Kits include a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss. You can apply for Smile Kits year-round.

Please note, Delta Dental of Kansas does not guarantee eligibility for any of the above programs or provide any financial advice. Please conduct your own research and consult with relevant experts as necessary to discuss your personal circumstances.

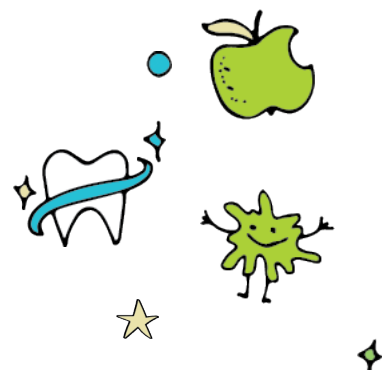
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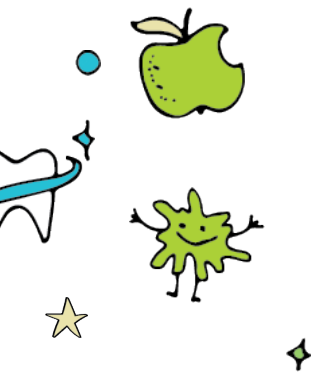
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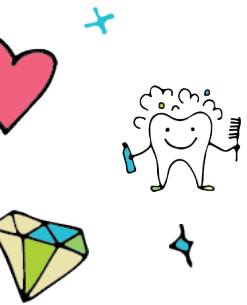
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FEEDBACK? COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS?

We'd love to hear what worked for your students — and what needs another pass.

Tell us how to make this guide work even harder for you at corpcomm@deltadentalks.com, or share quick notes [here](#) ...

... OR HERE





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