

A Smile for Science: Understanding Our Teeth

Learning objective: To identify the different types of human teeth and describe their functions in the digestive system.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions using full sentences. Use your knowledge of human biology to support your answers.

Bea the honeybee loves to buzz around the garden, but she is also fascinated by how humans eat! Humans have different types of teeth, each with a special job to start the process of digestion. At the front of your mouth are the incisors. These are sharp and chisel-shaped, perfect for biting into a crisp apple. Next to them are the pointed canines, which are designed for tearing food. Further back in the mouth, you will find premolars and molars. These teeth are wider and have flatter surfaces, which act like a grinding mill to crush food into smaller pieces. This is an essential step because it makes it easier for your stomach to process what you have eaten. Covering the outside of every tooth is enamel, the hardest substance in the human body. While it is very strong, it is important to brush regularly to keep it healthy. Without our teeth working together like a team, our bodies would find it much harder to get the nutrients we need from our meals.

Word bank: incisors · canines · molars · premolars · digestion · enamel · function

1. Identify the two types of teeth that are used for grinding and crushing food. (2 marks)

2. According to the text, what is the main purpose of the enamel on our teeth? (2 marks)

3. Why might a human struggle to eat a tough meal if they did not have canine teeth? (2 marks)

4. Explain why the author describes teeth as working 'like a team'. (2 marks)

5. Do you think it is more important to have sharp incisors or flat molars? Justify your opinion using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a diagram of the human mouth showing the positions of the incisors, canines, and molars. Label each type of tooth and draw a small arrow showing the direction they move when chewing.



Extension challenge: Research what happens to food after it leaves the mouth. Write a short paragraph explaining the next stage of the digestive system.