

Talking Terrific Teeth



photo by Senior Airman Francis Lalic, courtesy U.S. Air Force

Mini Fact:

Experts recommend seeing a dentist twice each year.

Do you take good care of your teeth? Good tooth care is very important for your health. In recent years, more kids are avoiding dental problems, such as tooth decay. Experts say this is because more kids are:

- using toothpaste with fluoride
- brushing properly
- visiting the dentist.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. In this issue, The Mini Page takes a good look at teeth.

What is a cavity?

A cavity is a hole, or a space where part of a material has been removed. A cavity in your tooth is a hole in your tooth.

Cavities are caused by bacteria, sugar and plaque (PLAK). Plaque is the sticky stuff coating your teeth. You may have noticed it after you eat or when you wake up in the morning.

Dentists can fill cavities, but it's better not to get them in the first place. It's not hard to take care of your teeth. Just follow these simple steps:

- Use toothpaste with fluoride. Fluoride is a material that helps harden the protective enamel on your teeth. It can also kill the bacteria that cause cavities.
- Limit your sweets.
- Drink water and milk instead of soda pop, juice or drinks like Kool-Aid. These drinks have a lot of sugar.
- Brush and floss. Brush at least twice a

day, in the morning and at night. Floss at least once a day.

Experts say neglecting your teeth can result in bad nutrition, poor appearance and pain. Untreated tooth decay can make it hard for kids to sleep, eat or pay attention in school.



Tooth care tips

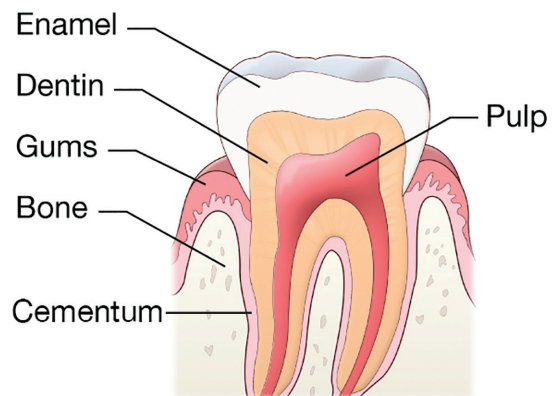
It is important to spend two whole minutes brushing your teeth each time — one minute on the top teeth and one minute on the bottom.

Keep a timer or clock in the bathroom and time yourself. If you don't, you may not brush long enough.

Gently brush the fronts, backs and bottoms of your teeth. Gently brush your tongue, too. This helps prevent bad breath.

Flossing helps get out food particles that may be stuck between your teeth. Pull the floss up and down. Don't slide it from the front to the back.

What's in a tooth?



art courtesy National Institutes of Health

• **Enamel** (eh-NA-muhl) is the white outer cover on your teeth. It is the hardest substance in the human body, even harder than bone. Enamel, made of minerals and protein, protects your teeth.

• **Dentin** is the next layer of the tooth. It is the second-hardest substance in the body. About two-thirds of each tooth is dentin. It is made up of calcium and other minerals and is similar to bone.

• **Pulp** makes up the inside of the tooth. Blood vessels and nerves live inside the pulp. If the tooth gets infected, this area is what hurts. Pulp is a kind of gel substance.

• **Cementum** (si-MEN-tum) is a rough substance that attaches the tooth to the jawbone. You can't see cementum, since it is below the gumline. It's one of the few substances that actually sticks to teeth.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPcavity
- bit.ly/MPtoothcare

At the library:

- "Open Wide: Tooth School Inside" by Laurie Keller

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Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of healthy teeth are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

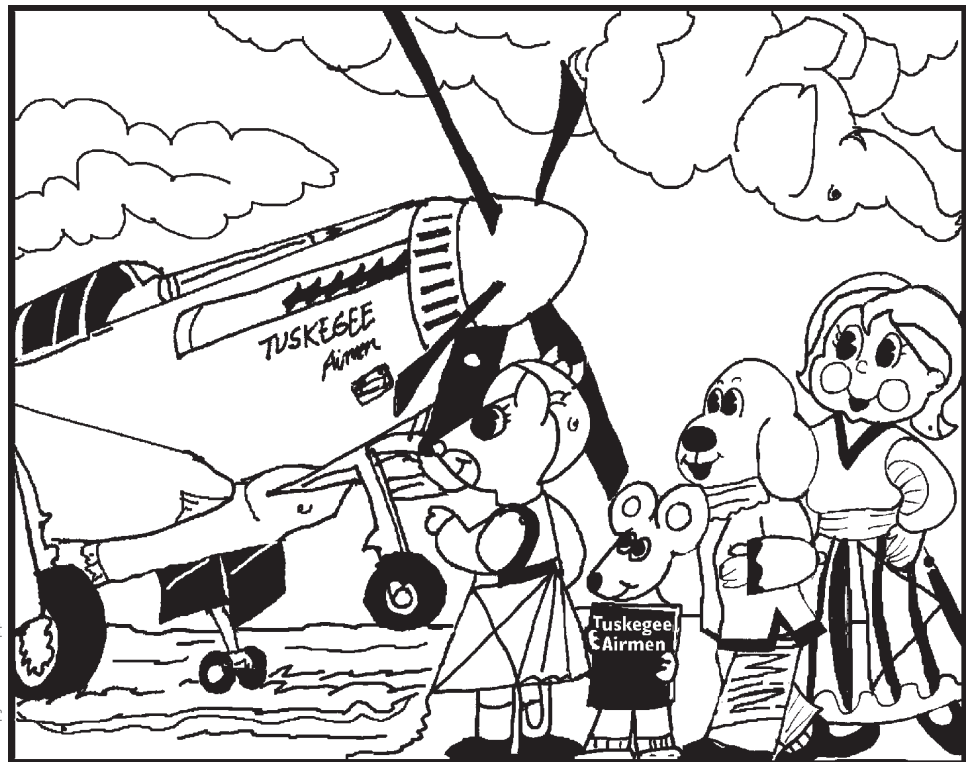


BACTERIA, BRUSH, CARE,
CAVITY, CEMENTUM,
DECAY, DENTAL, DENTIN,
DENTIST, ENAMEL,
FLOSS, FLUORIDE,
GUMLINE, HEALTH,
JAWBONE, PLAQUE,
PULP, SUGAR, TEETH,
TONGUE.

P L A Q U E F M S V B N G P T
J H T E E T L U T O N G U E M
A Q I G N N U T A C D L M Y I
C E Y C O I O N I S P G L A T
H L F A B T R E R S C L I C S
B E R R W N I M E O A A N E I
R M A E A E D E T L V T E D T
U A G L J D E C C F I N B H N
S N U Z T A M C A T T E N D E
H E S G C H A O B S Y D E K D

Mini Spy Classics

Mini Spy and her friends are visiting a Tuskegee Airmen exhibit. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



Mini Spy Classics appear in the first issue of each month.

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- bird
- exclamation mark
- word MINI
- number 2
- kite
- elephant
- lima bean
- snake
- key
- bell
- umbrella
- pencil
- man in the moon
- sailboat

Mini Jokes



Darla: What did the bailiff say to the dentist?

Denise: "Do you promise to pull the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth?"

Eco Note



Seventy-one percent of Earth is covered by water. More than 97 percent of this is salty seawater. Less than 3 percent is fresh water, found underground, in lakes and wetlands, and as solid ice. Earth has five major oceans. Starting with the largest, they are the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Southern and Arctic oceans. There are also many smaller seas. The Pacific Ocean covers 30 percent, or about one-third, of the planet's surface!

adapted with permission from "50 Things You Should Know About the Environment" by Jen Green (QEB Publishing)

For later:

Look through your newspaper for ads for dental care products.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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