

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

See how canines, and the rest of your teeth, got their names. Also, learn how a favorite summer treat — ice cream — influences oral health.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

JULY 2019

OPEN WIDE SEE WHAT'S INSIDE



P.2 Dental Visits
Decoded: X-Rays



P.3 Why you might think
twice before eating
too much ice cream



P.4 Healthy Recipe:
Blueberry-watermelon
granita

Why are they called canine teeth?



When you hear the word canine, you likely picture a dog, not a tooth. So, why do they have the same name? In fact, what is the origin of all your teeth's names?

Canines¹

It's no coincidence that these pointed teeth are named after dogs. They are called canines due to their resemblance to a dog's fangs. While our canine teeth aren't as long, pronounced or sharp as a dog's, they are usually longer and more pointed than our other human teeth. Canines are sometimes referred to as eye teeth because of their alignment under the eyes.

Incisors²

Incisors are the front teeth on both your upper and lower jaws. Because their primary purpose is to bite into food, their name came from the Latin word "incidere," which means cutter.

Molars³

Like incisors, molars are named after the function they perform. Molar is based on the Latin word "mola," which means millstone. Just as a mill grinds grain into meal, molars — located near the back of your mouth — grind food.

For many people, an extra set of molars (commonly known as wisdom teeth) emerges around age 17 or later. Because wisdom teeth are the last to appear, their name is derived from the belief that we grow wiser with age.⁴

Premolars⁵

As you may have already guessed, premolars are named for their alignment just in front of molars. Premolars are sometimes called bicuspids, due to the fact that they have two points or cusps.

DENTAL VISITS DECODED: X-RAYS



X-rays use small amounts of radiation to capture these images. Although the amount of radiation used is miniscule, your dentist should still take precautions to block unnecessary radiation, such as covering your body with a lead collar or apron. The dentist should only order those images that are essential for an accurate diagnosis of problems such as tooth decay and gum disease.

The type of X-ray you get depends on what your dentist is trying to view:

- **Bitewing X-rays** help show the areas between your teeth. You'll be asked to bite down on a piece of plastic that holds the film against your upper and lower teeth, giving your dentist a closer look at those nooks and crannies.⁶
- **Panoramic X-rays** show a broad view of your entire mouth, helping your dentist see wisdom tooth growth, bone levels and hardened plaque. You'll be asked to bite down on a "bite blocker" that helps keep your teeth aligned for the X-rays, and then a rotating arm on the machine will make a semi-circle around your head to record images from all angles.⁷
- **Periapical X-rays** let your dentist see an entire tooth, including the roots and surrounding bone structure.⁸ You hold this X-ray film in your mouth by biting firmly on a device that looks like a metal rod with a ring attached to it.
- **A full mouth survey** is a complete set of X-rays that cover your entire mouth, using a combination of the X-ray methods above.⁹

Whether you need a quick bitewing or a more extensive full mouth survey, feel free to ask your dentist questions about the procedure and what he can see from the X-ray.

SMILE STATS



Adult dogs have 42 teeth, 10 more than most humans.¹⁰



The birth of our country coincided with the nation's first ice cream parlor, which opened in New York in 1776.¹¹



Ben & Jerry's has received flavor suggestions that contain ingredients like Gorgonzola cheese, pepperoni, macaroni and french fries.¹²



Why you might think twice before eating too much ice cream



There are few treats more tempting than a cold dish of ice cream during the hottest days of summer. It's no wonder 90% of American households indulge in this frosty dessert.¹³ In honor of National Ice Cream Month in July, here's the scoop on how ice cream can have an effect on oral health.

Ice cream contains calcium.¹⁴

Let's start with the good news. Ice cream has calcium, along with other nutrients. And calcium is essential for building and maintaining strong teeth.

But it's often full of sugar.

The USDA reports that a half cup of vanilla ice cream contains a little more than 14 grams of sugar. That's about 56% of the recommended maximum amount of sugar adults should consume in a day.^{15,16} Consuming food that contains sugar produces acids that can eat away at your teeth's surface and cause cavities.¹⁷

Sweet toppings and mix-ins add even more sugar to ice cream. Many of these add-ons, such as syrup, caramel and candy bars, stick to your teeth and cause even more damage.

It can also make your teeth hurt.

If your teeth are sensitive to cold, eating ice cream can be uncomfortable. There are a number of possible reasons for cold sensitivity, including tooth decay, worn tooth enamel or exposed nerves due to receding gums.¹⁸

Good oral hygiene can help prevent sensitive tooth pain. But, if you already have sensitive teeth, talk to your dentist, who may recommend a desensitizing toothpaste or fluoride gel.¹⁹ If you eat ice cream with cold-sensitive teeth, lick it rather than biting into it.

You can limit the negative effects.

To keep ice cream from damaging your smile:

- Enjoy it in moderation and eat it with a meal.^{20,21}
- Look for low-sugar or sugar-free versions, or substitute with a lower sugar gelato, frozen yogurt or sorbet.²²
- Help remove sugars from your mouth by rinsing with water or chewing sugar-free gum after eating ice cream.

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: BLUEBERRY-WATERMELON GRANITA

Ingredients:



1 cup frozen blueberries



½ large seedless watermelon cut into chunks



1 teaspoon lime juice

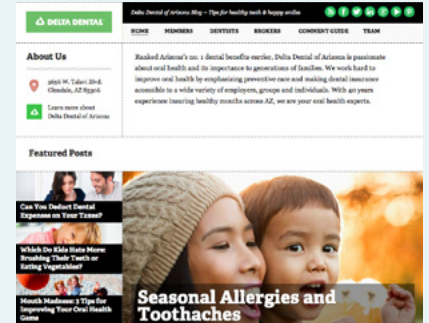
Directions:

Blend all ingredients in a blender or food processor. Pour into a shallow glass container and freeze for 30 to 60 minutes, depending on how frozen you would like it to be. Once frozen, scrape with a fork into a bowl and serve.

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