

January 2026

The Pennsylvania Dental Association (PDA) is pleased to provide you with the 2026 National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) lesson plan. Teaching this lesson during NCDHM and participating in our annual poster contest in February could help you win monetary prizes for your student, school and classroom.

The following pages contain a lesson plan for you to teach this February. To conclude the lesson, students can participate in the PDA sponsored poster contest. Contest rules are located at padental.org/NCDHM.

Please submit all entries to:

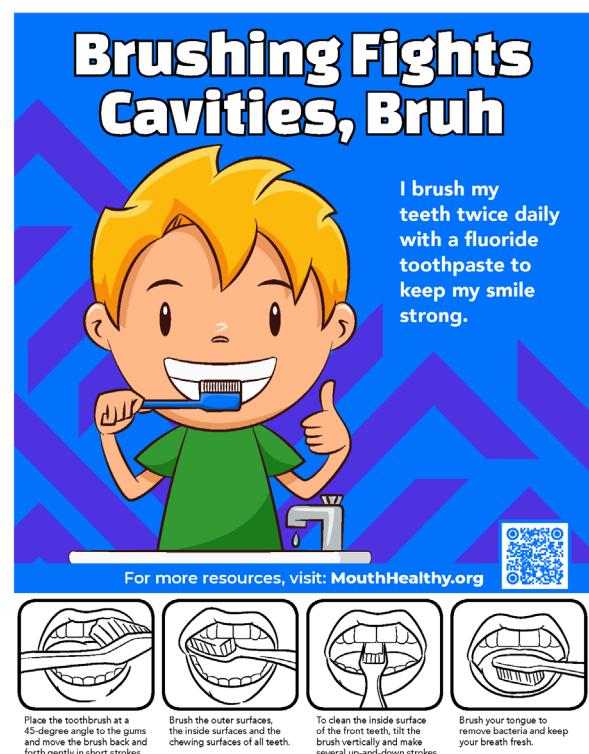
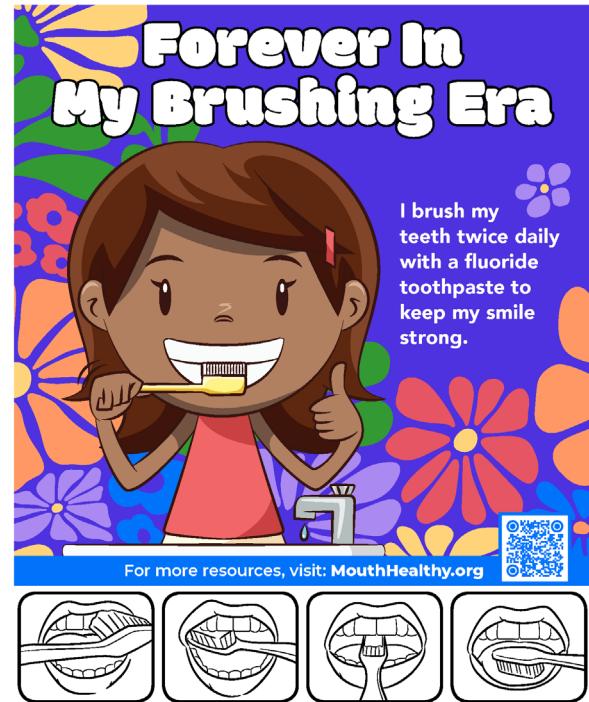
Pennsylvania Dental Association
Attn: NCDHM Poster Contest
3501 N. Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110

All entries must be received by February 27, 2026.

Once the statewide winners are selected, the grand prize winner will receive a \$500 prize plus \$250 for their school and \$250 for their classroom, the second-place winner will receive \$250 and the third-place winner will receive \$100.

The first, second and third-place winners and their schools will be notified at the end of March. The first-place winner will be awarded their grand prize at a school function to be determined by PDA and the school principal.

Thank you for participating in NCDHM. We appreciate your help in promoting this important oral health lesson to your students. Visit padental.org/NCDHM, for more information!



An Oral Health Lesson for Third Grade Students

Brush and clean in between to build a healthy smile!



Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.



Clean between your teeth daily.



Eat a healthy diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks.



See your dentist regularly for prevention and treatment of oral disease.

BRUSHING AND FLOSSING

Brush teeth twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste to remove plaque from the inner, outer and chewing tooth surfaces. Bacteria lingers between teeth where your toothbrush bristles cannot reach, so it is important to floss daily.

Flossing removes plaque and food particles trapped between your teeth and below your gumlines. Plaque is a sticky, colorless film of bacteria that forms on teeth. When sugar and starch from food or drinks combine with plaque, an acid is produced that attacks tooth enamel.

Repeated acid attacks cause the enamel to break down and cavities to form. Poor dental hygiene, not brushing or flossing daily, results in cavities, periodontal (gum) disease and tooth loss.

PERIODONTAL DISEASE

If plaque is not removed, it hardens into tartar, which can only be removed by a dentist.

When tartar settles along the gumline, the gums pull away from the teeth and form pockets, allowing bacteria to attack teeth roots.

Warning signs of gum disease include gums that bleed easily, especially when brushed, chronic inflamed gums and sore gums. If gum disease is not treated, it could result in tooth loss.

VISITING THE DENTIST

Teeth should be professionally cleaned and checked once every six months. A member of the dental team can remove plaque and tartar from the gumline. X-rays taken during the oral exam uncover hidden problems and check developing teeth.

FLUORIDE

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that strengthens tooth enamel, protecting teeth from decay. When combined with proper oral care (brushing, flossing and regular dental check-ups), fluoride greatly reduces dental decay. Dentists often recommend fluoride treatments or supplements when the community's water supply is not fluoridated.

MOUTHGUARDS

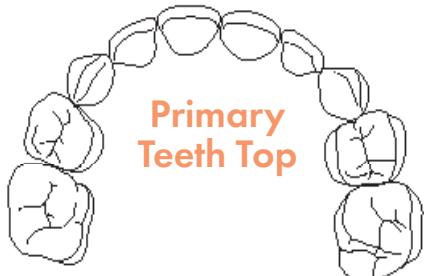
Mouthguards are required for high-contact sports like football, hockey and boxing. However, dentists strongly recommend them for any sport where contact or collision may occur, such as basketball, soccer and wrestling.

A properly fitted mouthguard can prevent most sports-related tooth and mouth injuries and may even prevent concussions by acting like a shock absorber between upper and lower teeth.



An Oral Health Lesson for Third Grade Students

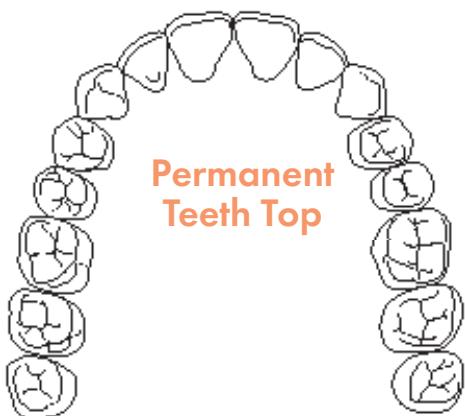
PRIMARY TEETH, or baby teeth, are the first set of teeth to come in. Most children have all 20 baby teeth by age three.



PERMANENT TEETH push primary teeth out of the way, causing them to fall out.

By about age 14, all primary teeth have been replaced by 28 permanent teeth.

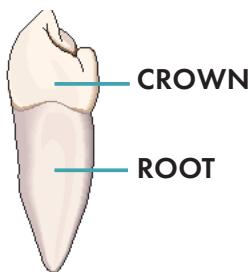
A full set of permanent teeth, 32 teeth in all, is achieved by the late teens to early 20s with the arrival of the wisdom teeth.



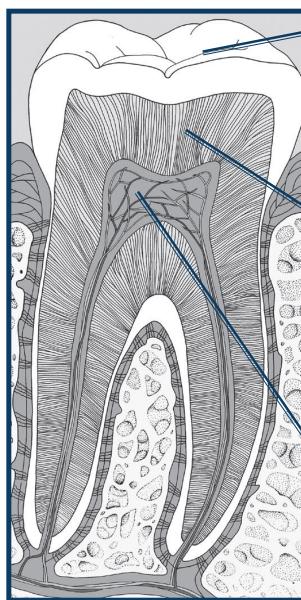
PARTS OF A TOOTH

The **crown** is the part of the tooth that you can see above the gumline. It is covered by enamel.

The **root** is located under the gumline and encases the pulp.



INSIDE A TOOTH



ENAMEL protects the inside of the tooth by acting as a barricade. Enamel is the hardest substance in the human body.

DENTIN is located underneath enamel to protect the pulp and is a substance similar to bone. The majority of the tooth is comprised of dentin.

PULP contains each tooth's nerve endings and the blood vessels that bring nutrients to the tooth.

TYPES OF TEETH

INCISORS



Incisors are shaped like tiny chisels that are used for cutting and chopping food. Your front four teeth on the top and bottom of your mouth are incisors.

CANINES



The pointy shaped teeth next to your incisors are canines. You have two canines on top and two on the bottom and use them to tear food.

PREMOLARS



When all the permanent teeth have come in, four premolars are found next to each canine.

Premolars are bigger and stronger than canines and incisors. They have ridges that are used to crush and grind food.

MOLAR



The last type of tooth is the molar. The 12 molars (six on the top jaw and six on the bottom jaw) are very wide with several ridges to grind up food so it can be swallowed.