

# VOCABULARY

This vocabulary is listed in the order of the alphabet:  
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Most names of sicknesses are not in this vocabulary. Find the name of a sickness in the Index and read about it in the book.

There are many words in this vocabulary that are not in the rest of the book, but you may see them in other books or hear dentists use them.

## A

**Abscess** A sac of pus caused by an infection. For example, a boil.

**Acid** A strong liquid that is produced from certain foods left in the mouth. Acid causes both tooth decay and gum disease.

**Acute** Sudden and short-lived. An acute illness is one that starts suddenly and lasts a short time. The opposite of 'chronic'.

**Adrenaline** Also called **epinephrine**. A drug which stimulates the heart, used for severe allergic shock.

**Adult teeth** See **Permanent teeth**.

**Allergy** A bad reaction after breathing in, eating, touching, or being injected with something. The reaction may be itching, sneezing, or difficult breathing.

**Analgesic** Medicine to calm pain. Aspirin, paracetamol (acetaminophen), ibuprofen, and codeine are all analgesics.

**Amalgam** A special metal used in permanent fillings.

**Anemia** A disease in which the blood gets thin. Signs include tiredness, pale skin, and lack of energy.

**Anesthetic** A drug that causes the mouth or other part of the body to feel numb.

**Antibiotic** Medicine that fights infections caused by bacteria. A **broad-spectrum** antibiotic such as tetracycline kills many kinds of bacteria, while a **narrow-spectrum** antibiotic like penicillin kills only a few kinds of bacteria.

**Appropriate** Something that is the easiest, safest, and most likely to work in a particular situation or condition.

**Arkansas stone** A special stone used to sharpen dental instruments.

**Aspirate** To breathe. An 'aspirating syringe' is one that can 'breathe', or allow liquid to go both in and out of the needle tip.

## B

**Baby teeth** The first set of teeth. There are 20 baby teeth, which are also called milk teeth or primary teeth.

**Bacteria** Tiny germs that you can only see with a microscope and that cause many different infectious diseases.

**Beeswax** Wax made by honey bees.

**Bicuspid** The teeth between the canine teeth and the molars; premolars.

**Bite** (1) To cut with the teeth. (2) The way the upper and lower teeth fit together when they close.

**Blood pressure** The force, or pressure, of the blood flowing through the blood vessels (veins and arteries).

**Blood vessels** Tubes that carry blood through the body. Veins and arteries.

**Boil** (1) To heat water until it bubbles. (2) A swollen, inflamed lump with a pocket of pus under the skin. A kind of abscess.

**Brand name** Trade name, the name a company gives to its product. A brand-name medicine is sold under a special name and is often more expensive than the same generic medicine.

**Bridge** False teeth that are glued onto several nearby healthy teeth.

**Buccal** Of the cheek. The buccal face of a tooth is the side facing the cheek.

**Bulk** Large quantity or amount.

## C

**Calcium** A nutritional element which makes teeth strong and hard.

**Calculus** Tartar.

**Calories** Units of heat found in food, giving energy for the body to use.

**Cancer** A tumor or lump that grows and may keep growing until it causes death.

**Canine teeth** Also called cuspids, dog teeth, and eye teeth. These teeth have the longest roots of any tooth.

**Carbohydrates** Starches and sugars—foods that give energy. In this book they are called GO foods.

**Caries** Cavities; tooth decay.

**Cavity** A hole in a tooth where bacteria have entered.

**Cement filling** A temporary filling, which may protect a tooth for up to 6 months. Also see Filling.

**Cementum** The outer covering of the tooth's root.

**Chronic** Long-term or frequently recurring (compare with 'acute'). A chronic disease is one that lasts for a long time.

**Colony** Germs grouped together in one place.

**Contagious disease** A sickness that can be spread easily from one person to another.

**Contraindication** A situation or condition when a particular medicine should not be taken, or a certain treatment not given. For example, many medicines are contraindicated during pregnancy.

**Crown** The top 1/3 of the tooth, the part that is protected with hard enamel.

**Curette** A scaling instrument.

**Cuspids** Canine teeth.

**Cyst** An abnormal, sac-like growth in the body which is often filled with water.

## D

**Decay** See Tooth Decay.

**Dentition** A whole set of teeth.

**Dental floss** See Floss.

**Dental worker** A health worker who works for healthy teeth and gums.

**Dentist** A professional who has advanced formal education in care of teeth and gums.

**Dentures** False teeth.

**Diagnosis** A decision made by a health worker about what a person's illness is.

**Diet** The kinds and amounts of foods that a person should eat or avoid eating.

**Dislocation** A bone that has slipped out of place at a joint.

**Distal** The side of the tooth that faces the back of the mouth. The opposite side from the 'mesial' side.

**Drill** An instrument used to change the shape of a cavity before placing a filling.

**Duct** A tube that carries liquid. For example, ducts carry spit from the spit gland to the mouth.

## E

**Elevator** An instrument used to loosen a tooth before you take it out.

**Enamel** The protective layer that covers the crown (top part) of a tooth. The enamel is the hardest part of the body.

**Epulis** A tumor of the gums, usually found between the teeth.

**Eruption** The moment when a new tooth cuts through the gums and becomes visible in the mouth.

**Evaluation** A study to find out the value of something, or to find out what has been accomplished. Evaluations often compare different conditions before and after a new activity begins.

**Examination** A careful look at something; an investigation.

**Expiration date** The month and year marked on a medicine that tells when it will no longer be good. Throw away most medicines after this date.

**Explorer** See **Probe**.

**Extraction** Taking out a tooth.

## F

**False tooth** A 'tooth' made of plastic or other material, used to replace a tooth that has been taken out.

**Fever** A body temperature higher than normal.

**Fiber** A fine, threadlike piece. A **fibrous food** like coconut contains a lot of fiber.

**Filling** Material put into the cavity in a tooth to prevent further decay.

**First aid** Emergency care or treatment for someone who is sick or injured.

**Floss** Special string used to clean between the teeth.

**Fluoride** A chemical which strengthens the teeth. Painted on the teeth, as an ingredient in toothpaste, or added to water for drinking or rinsing, fluoride enters and hardens the enamel. It is especially good for children's teeth.

**Forceps** Instruments used to pull teeth.

**Fracture** A broken bone.

**G**

**Gauze** A material made of cotton, woven into an open mesh.

**Generic name** The scientific name of a medicine. Usually different from the brand names given it by the different companies that make it.

**Germs** Very small organisms that can grow in the body and cause some infectious diseases; bacteria.

**Gram** A metric unit of weight. There are about 28 grams in an ounce. A paper clip weighs about 1 gram.

**Groove** A long, narrow cut on the surface of back teeth. Grooves are ‘protected areas’ because food and germs can hide and remain in them longer.

**Gum bubble** Also called a **gum boil**. A small abscess on the gums.

**Gum disease** Illness that causes gums to become loose, red, and swollen, and to bleed when the teeth are cleaned.

**Gum pocket** The space between the tooth and the flap of gums around it, forming a small pocket.

**Gums** The skin around the teeth.

**H**

**Hemorrhage** Bleeding.

**Hemostat** A needle holder, used for putting in sutures.

**Herb** A plant, especially one valued for its medicinal or healing qualities.

**History (Medical history)** What you can learn through asking questions about a person’s sickness—how it began, when it gets better or worse, what seems to help, whether others in the village or family have it, etc.

**Hydrogen peroxide** A liquid used to clean wounds and kill certain bacteria.

**Hypertension** High blood pressure.

**I**

**Immunizations (vaccinations)** Medicines that give protection against specific diseases. For example, there are immunizations against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis, and measles.

**Incisors** The four front teeth on the top and bottom.

**Infection** A sickness caused by bacteria or other germs. Infections may affect part of the body only (such as a sinus infection) or all of it (such as measles).

**Infectious disease** A disease that is easily passed from one person to another; contagious disease.

**Inflammation** An area that is red, hot, and painful, often because it is infected.

**Inject** To give a medicine such as an immunization or anesthetic, using a syringe.

**J**

**Joint** The place where two bones meet. When this book talks about the ‘pain in the joint’, it means the joint (called the ‘temporomandibular joint’) where the cheek and jaw bones meet.

**K**

**Kilogram (kg)** One thousand grams. A ‘kilo’ weighs a little more than 2 pounds.

**L**

**Labial** Of the lips. The labial side of a tooth is the face of the tooth nearest the lips.

**Ligature wire** A thin, strong wire that bends easily, used to attach a loose tooth to a strong tooth.

**Lingual** Of the tongue. The lingual side of a tooth is the face of the tooth nearest the tongue.

**M**

**Malnutrition** Health problems caused by not eating enough of the foods that the body needs.

**Mandible** The lower jaw bone.

**Maxilla** The upper jaw bone.

**Mesial** The side of the tooth that faces the front of the mouth; the opposite of ‘distal’.

**Milligram (mg)** One thousandth of a gram.

**Molar** The back teeth, used for grinding. Molars are the largest teeth in the mouth, with 2 or even 3 roots each.

## N

**Nerves** Thin threads or strings that run from the brain to every part of the body and carry messages for feeling, pain or movement. There is a nerve, along with a blood vessel, in every root of every tooth.

**Numb** Without feeling; anesthetized. When teeth and the gums around them are numb, they cannot feel pain.

**Nutrition** The mixture of foods the body needs to grow, be healthy, and fight off disease.

## O

**Occlusal** The biting surface, or top, of the tooth.

**Oral** Of the mouth. An oral medicine is one taken by mouth.

**Organisms** Living things (animals or plants).

## P

**Palate** The roof or top part of the mouth.

**Permanent filling** A filling using a special metal or ceramic material which lasts for years.

**Permanent teeth** The 32 adult teeth which grow into the mouth to replace the baby teeth.

**Petroleum jelly (petrolatum, Vaseline)** A grease-like jelly used in preparing skin ointments.

**Plaque** A film or coating of germs that can form on the teeth, mix with food and make acid. You cannot see plaque unless you stain it.

**Plate** A set of false teeth.

**Premolars** The teeth between the molars and the canine teeth; bicuspid.

**Prenatal** Before birth.

**Prevention** Action taken to stop sickness before it starts.

**Probe** An instrument for examining teeth for tartar or other problems.

**Protective foods** Foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals. They help build healthy bodies and make people more able to resist or fight diseases. In this book they are called GLOW foods.

**Proteins** Body-building foods necessary for proper growth and strength. In this book they are called GROW foods.

**Pus** A yellow-white liquid found inside infections.

## R

**Records, reports** Written information about sick persons and the treatment they receive. Records are for the personal use of the health worker, reports are written by one health worker to another to describe an illness and ask for further treatment.

**Resistance** The ability of something to defend itself against something that would normally harm or kill it. Many bacteria become resistant to the effects of certain antibiotics.

**Rinse** To hold a liquid in the mouth, moving around inside the mouth.

**Risk** The possibility of injury, loss, or harm. Danger.

**Root** The lower part of the tooth, under the gum, connected to the bone.

**Root canal** The hollow part of every root of a tooth, which has a blood vessel and a nerve inside.

**Root canal treatment** A special operation on a dead tooth to remove material from the root canal and replace it with filling material.

**Root fibers** Tiny fibers which hold the root of the tooth to the jaw bone.

## S

**Saliva** Spit. Saliva helps us to swallow our food.

**Scab** The crust of dry blood that forms over a wound.

**Scale** To scrape the tartar off the teeth. A **scaler** is an instrument for scaling.

**Scientific method** A way of learning something. It begins with information, then an idea, and then the idea is tested against the information available.

**Side effects** Problems caused by using a medicine.

**Signs** The things or conditions to look for when you examine a sick person, to find out what sickness the person has. In this book the symptoms (the problems a person feels) are included with signs.

**Sinus** A hollow place inside the bone.

**Socket** The wound left after you take out a tooth.

**Soft drinks** Fizzy, carbonated drinks like Coca-Cola.

**Spatula** An instrument used for mixing cement for fillings.

**Starches** Energy foods like maize, rice, wheat, cassava, potatoes, and squash.

**Sterile** Completely clean and free from living micro-organisms. Things usually are not sterile until you boil them or steam them.

**Sterilize** To make things sterile by boiling or steaming for 30 minutes.

**Sugars** Sweet foods like honey, sugar, or fruit that give energy but often cause tooth and gum problems.

**Survey** A collection of facts about a small group of persons or things in the community. If the small group is not unusual, the survey results will describe the whole community.

**Suture** A stitch made with needle and thread to sew up an opening or wound.

**Swelling** An area of the skin that is abnormally large, puffed up. A swollen area is one that has swelling.

**Symptoms** The feelings or conditions that sick persons report about their sickness. In this book, symptoms are included with signs.

**Syringe** An instrument with a small sharp needle, for giving injections.

## T

**Tablespoon** A measuring spoon that holds 3 teaspoons or 15 ml.

**Tartar** A hard, rocky coating on the tooth near the gums, also called calculus or toothstone. Tartar forms when old plaque mixes with calcium in the spit.

**Teaspoon** A measuring spoon that holds 5 ml. Three teaspoons equal one tablespoon.

**Teething** The action of new teeth cutting through the gums. Also see **Eruption**.

**Temperature** The degree of heat of something, such as the air or a person's body.

**Temporary filling** A filling meant only to last until a permanent filling can be placed.

**T.M.J.** The temporomandibular joint. See **Joint**.

**Tooth abscess** See **Abscess**.

**Tooth decay** Damage to the tooth caused by acid; cavities.

**Toothache** Pain in a tooth.

**Toothpaste** A paste for cleaning teeth.

**Tongue depressor** A tongue blade; a piece of wood used to keep the tongue out of the way when examining or treating the teeth.

**Top of the tooth** The part of the tooth that bites on food. For both upper and lower teeth, the biting surface is the 'top' and the root is at the 'bottom'.

**Topical** On top of the skin. A topical medicine is put on the skin.

**Traditions** Practices, beliefs, or customs handed down from one generation to another by example or word of mouth.

**Treatment** Care given by a health worker to fight an illness, attend to an injury, or prevent a new problem.

**Tropical** Having to do with the tropics—the hot regions of the world.

**Tumor** An abnormal mass of tissue without inflammation. Some tumors are due to cancer.

**Tweezer** Small metal instrument for picking up cotton or small objects. Some persons use the word **forceps** for tweezers, but in this book, forceps are instruments for taking out a tooth.

## U

**Ulcer** A break in the skin or mucus membrane; a chronic open sore that can appear on the skin, gums, or gut.

## V

**Vaccinations** See **Immunizations**.

**Vaseline** See **Petroleum jelly**.

**Vessels** See **Blood vessels**.

**Virus** Germs smaller than bacteria, which cause some infectious diseases, like measles or the common cold.

**Vitamins** Ingredients in fruits and vegetables that our bodies need to work properly.

**Volume** The amount of space a thing occupies. We measure volume in liters, ml, gallons, etc.

## W

**Weight** The heaviness or lightness of a thing. We measure weight in kilograms, mg, pounds, etc.

**Wisdom teeth** The 3rd molars, which grow into the mouth when a person is 16-22 years old.

## X

**X-ray** A special photograph that allows you to see bone, roots of teeth, etc., under the skin.