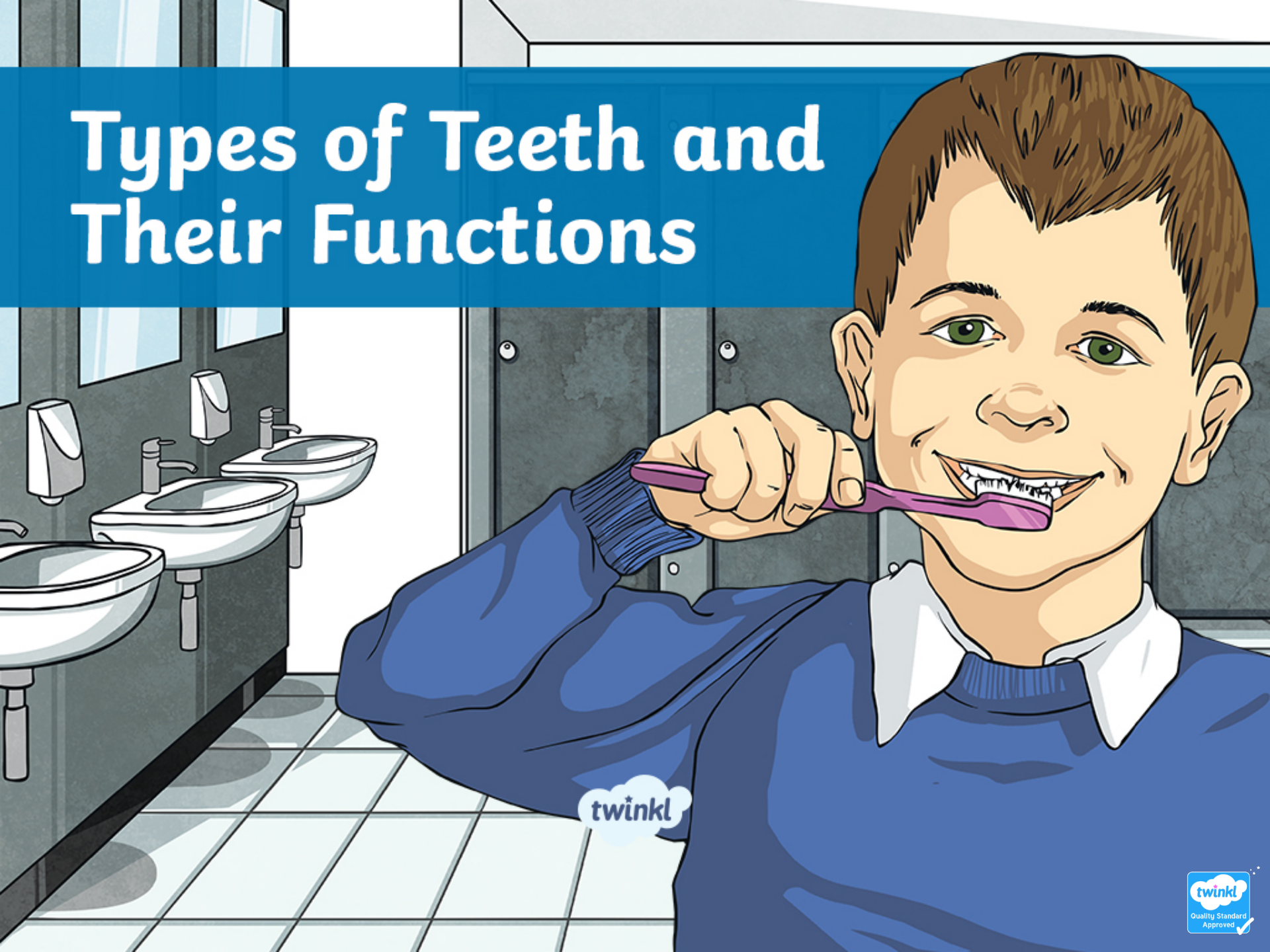
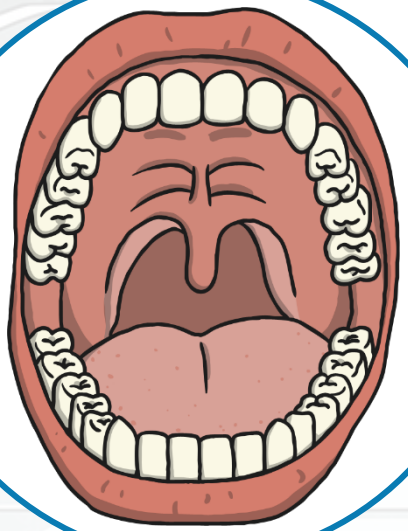
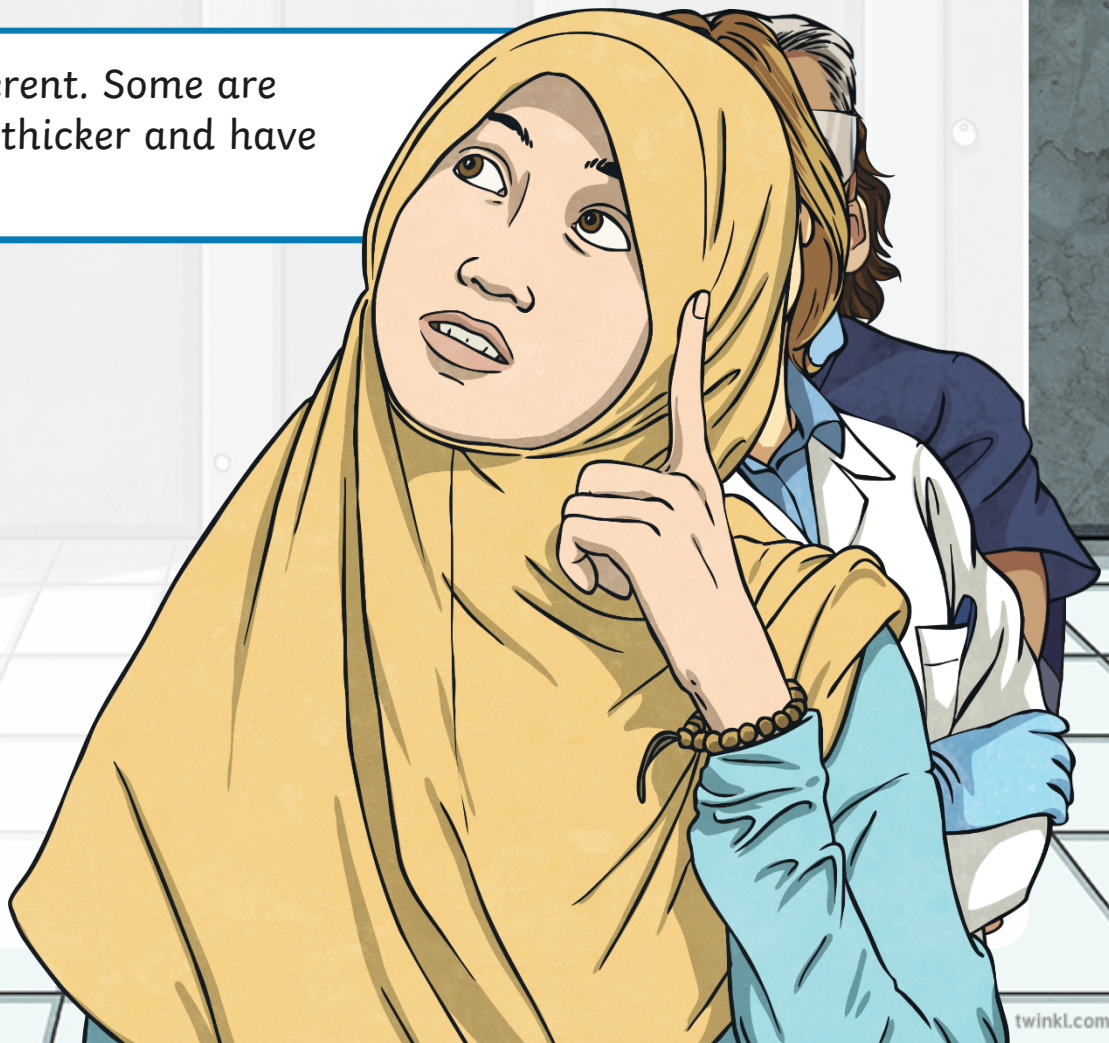
Types of Teeth and Their Functions



Teeth

I can feel that my teeth are different. Some are thin and quite sharp, others are thicker and have ridges along them.





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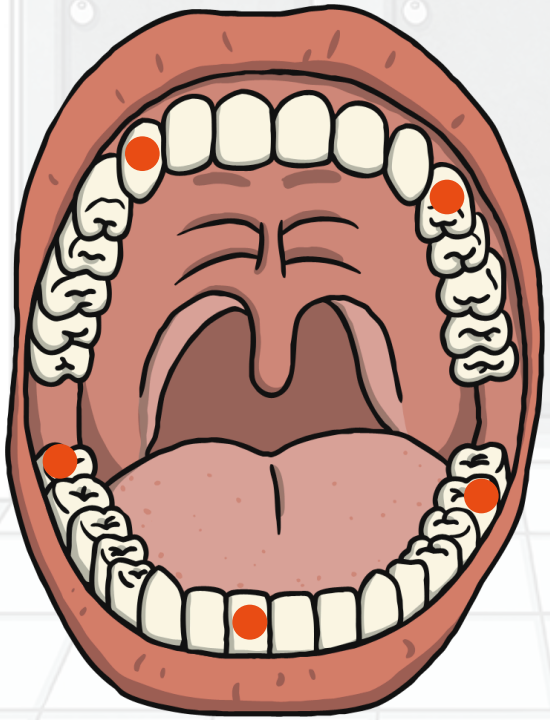
Types of Teeth

Click on a tooth to find out more about it.



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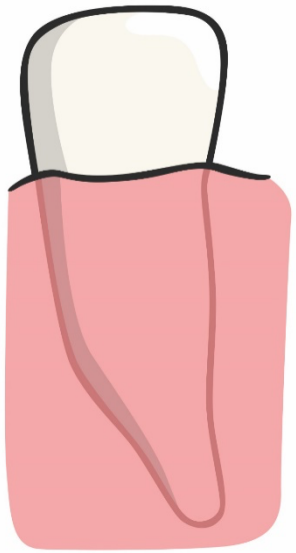
Incisors

Incisors are used for biting and cutting food. Think about biting into an apple. It is your incisors that bite into the apple and cut it up. They are at the front of your mouth and you have eight of them, four at the top and four at the bottom.



Did You Know?

Children have 20 teeth. A full adult set contains 32 teeth.

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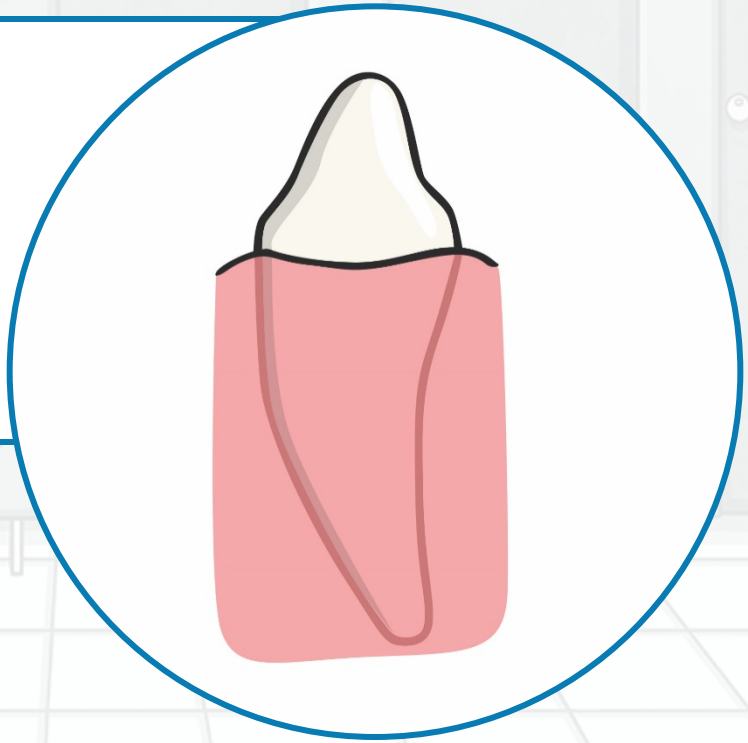
Canines

Canines are used for ripping and tearing food. Your canines are either side of your incisors and you have four of them. The word 'canine' means 'something connected to dogs'. As you can see, canine teeth are often pointy, a bit like the teeth of a dog or wolf.



Did You Know?

Carnivores (animals that eat only meat) have large canine teeth to help rip their food.

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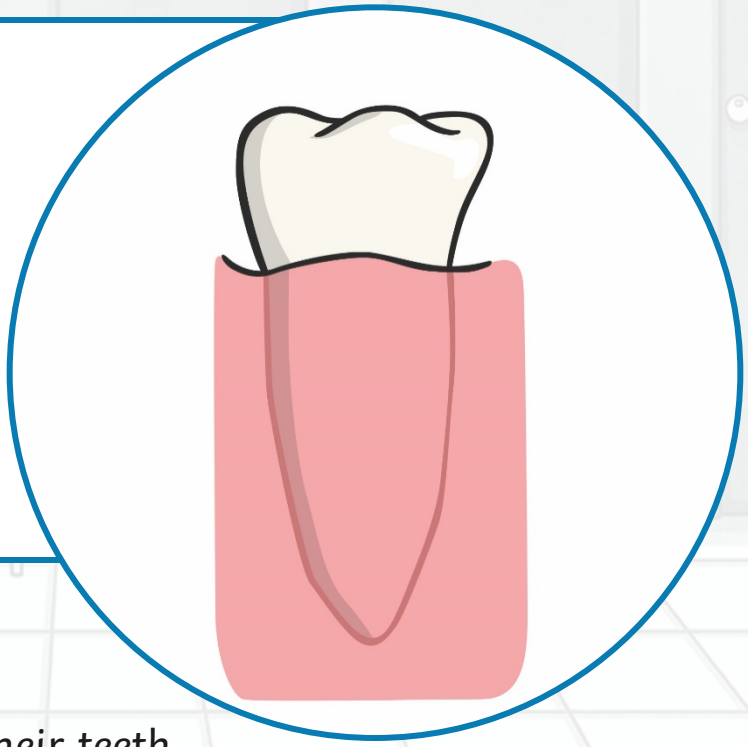
Premolars and Molars

Premolars and molars are towards the back of your mouth. They are bigger and wider than incisors and canines and this is because of their functions. Premolars are used for holding and crushing food. At the very back of the mouth, are molars (bigger versions of premolars). They chew and grind up food, working with your tongue to prepare food for swallowing.



Did You Know?

Babies are born with all their teeth, even their adult ones! The teeth just haven't emerged through the gums yet.

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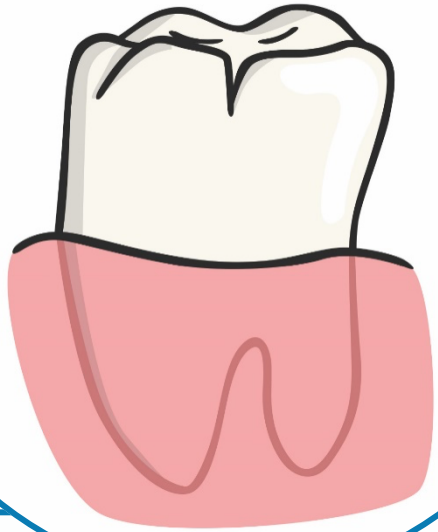
Wisdom Teeth

Wisdom teeth are an extra set of molars at the very back of the mouth. Despite their name, wisdom teeth are nothing to do with being clever! Scientists think wisdom teeth come from a very long time ago, when our ancestors ate a diet of coarser, rougher food. They needed an extra set of molars to chew up the food. Over time, humans' diets have changed and now wisdom teeth have no function. Wisdom teeth usually emerge in adults when they are around 18 years old or older.



Did You Know?

Lots of adults never have wisdom teeth emerge. Sometimes they have just a few come through. Ask your teacher if they have any wisdom teeth.

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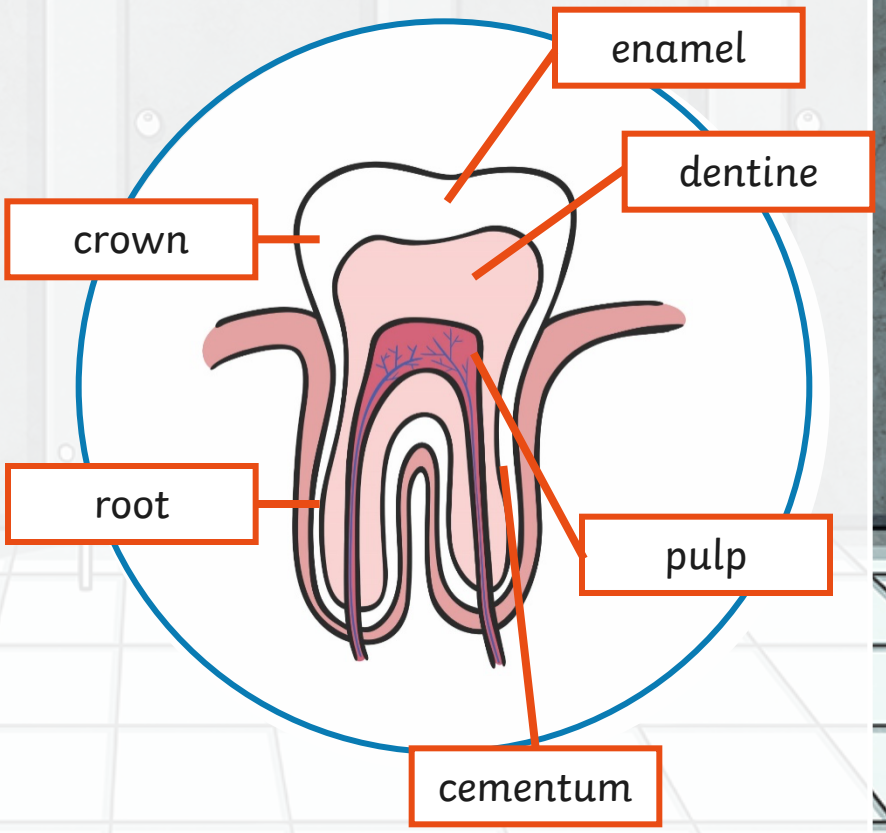
Inside a Tooth

crown – The part of the tooth above the gum that you can see.
root – The part of the tooth hidden under the gum.
enamel – The shiny, white surface of a tooth. Enamel is the hardest substance in the human body.
dentine – A hard substance which protects the inside of the tooth.
pulp – The part of the tooth which contains blood vessels and nerves. The blood vessels keep the tooth alive. The nerves send messages to your brain, for example whether you are eating something very hot or very cold.
cementum – The layer which covers and protects the root of the tooth.



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How to Care for Your Teeth

In 30 seconds, write down as many ways as you can remember of how to look after your teeth.

How many could you think of? Here are some ideas.

30

- Brush your teeth twice a day.
- Brush your teeth for two minutes each time.
- Avoid too many sugary foods and drinks.
- Visit the dentist regularly.
- Choose drinks such as water and milk when possible.

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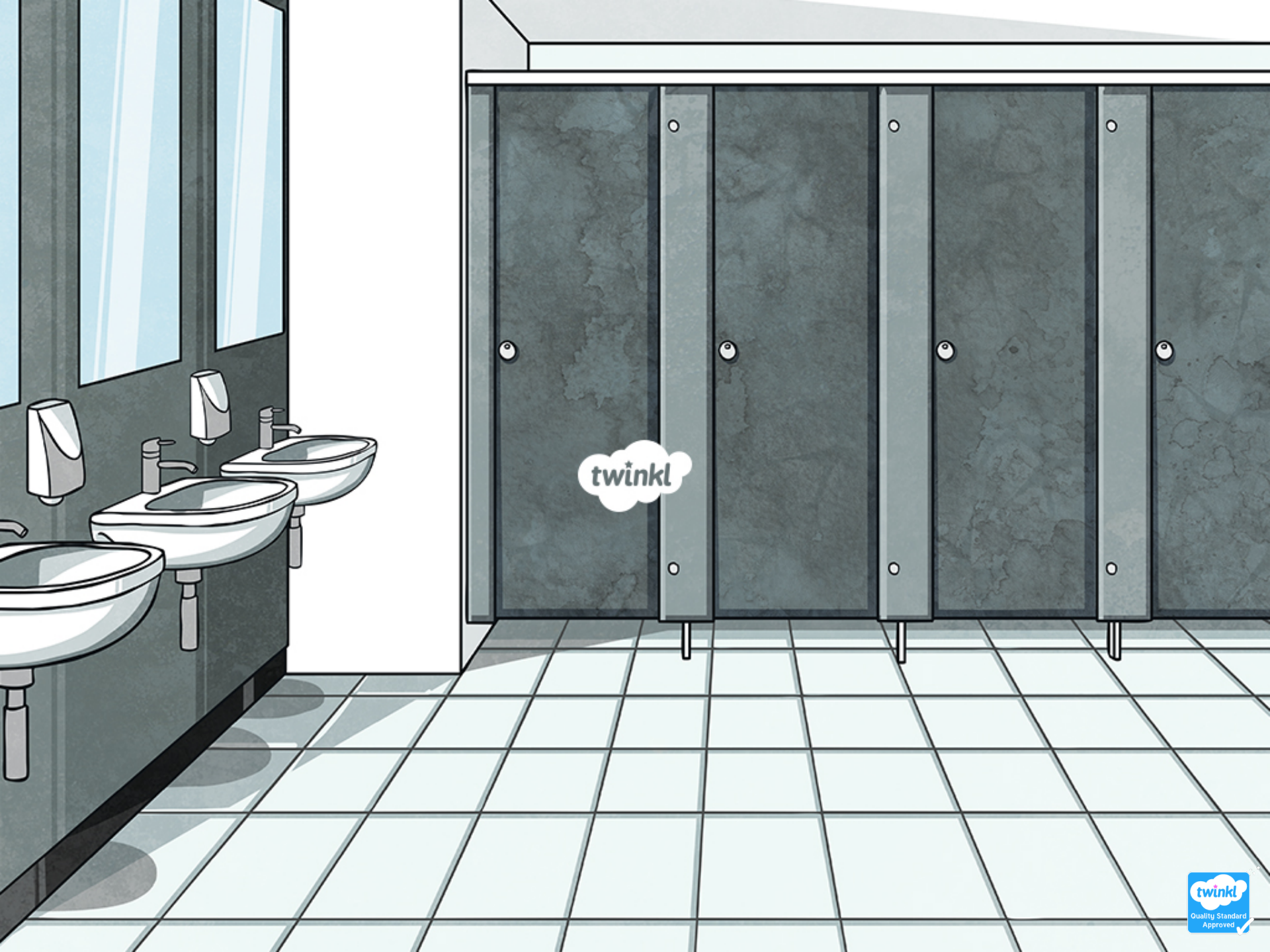
Why Do We Need to Care for Our Teeth?

My little sister has just lost one of her teeth, but that's alright because it is one of her milk teeth. She will have an adult tooth grow in its place. If I lose one of my teeth, I won't have another one grow in its place. I need to look after my teeth!

Did You Know?

When a shark loses a tooth, another one always grows in its place. A shark may get through 20,000 teeth!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