

<b>Topic</b>	Health
<b>Phenomenon</b>	Digestion
<b>Experiment</b>	Our mouth
<b>Available material</b>	1 flashlight 1 mirror illustration of the inside of the mouth
<b>Additional material</b>	several pieces of fruit a little dried bread, cracker, or similar food
<b>Preparation for experiment</b>	Divide the bread or equivalent into small pieces. Make sure that none of the children has any allergies to the foods in question.

### Research question

What is inside our mouth? What is saliva for?

### Description

The children show each other their tongues and use their tongues to explore what is in their own mouths. Look at the illustration of the inside of the mouth together. Using the hand-held mirrors and flashlights, have the children try to see the details in their own mouths. Have the children look at their teeth more closely: How many do they have? Do they have different shapes? The children can bite off a piece of fruit and observe which teeth they use for biting and which teeth are used for chewing.

What do the children think are the tasks of the tongue and of saliva? Ask the children to take a little piece of hard bread into their mouths without chewing it. Does it change? Then have them start to chew the bread and look at it now and then in the hand-held mirror. What happens to the bread?

### Explanation

Children have 20 milk teeth: the front and central incisors and two molars on each side. The latter are used for chewing and chopping food. The incisors cut and chop the food. Children generally start to lose their milk teeth from the age of about six, and the permanent dentition of 28 – 32 teeth is formed. The tongue plays a part in chewing, sucking, and swallowing; it has sense organs to taste and feel the food and is an important component in speech formation.

First, the saliva moistens the oral cavity, which is what makes swallowing, speaking, and tasting possible and which also influences smelling. Only when soluble substances in the food are dissolved in the saliva do we have any perception of taste. Dry food is turned into a moist purée by the saliva so that it can be swallowed and digested in the stomach.

### Further ideas

Encourage the children to make lots of different sounds with their mouths. Can the children whistle, and can they click with their tongues? Daily dental care can also be included as a topic at this point.