

Looking for a dental project for school?

Some food for thought

Are you writing a term paper, giving a speech, looking for science project ideas or just curious about dental careers? The American Dental Association's Web site (www.ada.org) has helpful information that can meet your needs.

EXPLORING THE HISTORY OF DENTISTRY

If you're looking for a topic for a report or a speech, consider dental history. What did ancient people do about a toothache? When did people start using toothpaste? Here are just a few interesting historical dental facts found at www.ada.org/public/topics/history/timeline_ancient.asp to get you started:

- 5000 B.C.: A Sumerian text of this date describes "tooth worms" as the cause of dental decay.
- 500-300 B.C.: Hippocrates and Aristotle write about dentistry, including the eruption pattern of teeth, treating decayed teeth and gum disease, extracting teeth with forceps, and using wires to stabilize loose teeth and fractured jaws.
- 1130-1163: A series of papal edicts prohibit monks from performing any type of surgery, bloodletting or tooth extraction. Barbers often assisted monks in their surgical ministry because they visited monasteries to shave the heads of monks and the tools of the barber trade—sharp knives and razors—were useful for surgery. After the edicts, barbers assume the monks' surgical duties, among them bloodletting, lancing abscesses and extracting teeth.
- 1530: "The Little Medicinal Book for All Kinds of Diseases and Infirmities of the Teeth" ("Artzney Buchlein" in the original German), the first book devoted entirely to dentistry, is published in Germany. Written for barbers and surgeons who treat the mouth, it covers practical topics such as oral hygiene, tooth extraction, drilling teeth and placement of gold fillings.
- 1839: Charles Goodyear invents the vulcanization process for hardening rubber. The resulting product—called "vulcanite"—an inexpensive

material easily molded to the mouth, makes an excellent base for false teeth and soon is adopted for use by dentists. In 1864, the molding process for vulcanite dentures is patented, but the dental profession fights the onerous licensing fees for the next 25 years.

- 1895: Wilhelm Roentgen, a German physicist, discovers the X-ray. In 1896, prominent New Orleans dentist C. Edmond Kells takes the first dental radiograph of a living person in the United States.
- 1938: The nylon toothbrush, the first made with synthetic bristles, appears on the market.
- 1960: The first commercial electric toothbrush, developed in Switzerland after World War II, is introduced in the United States. A cordless, rechargeable model follows in 1961.

OTHER INTERESTING DENTAL TOPICS

Looking for presentation ideas? How about oral piercing? Visit www.ada.org/public/topics/piercing.asp. The Classroom Ideas and Resources section at www.ada.org/public/education/teachers/ideas.asp suggests some interesting hands-on demonstrations and presentation guidelines, and you'll find science project resources at www.ada.org/public/education/students/projects_science.asp. For statistics about how many dentists there are in the United States, how often people visit the dentist and other interesting data, visit www.ada.org/ada/prod/survey/faq.asp.

Visit these links for additional information:

- Dental Career fact sheets: www.ada.org/public/education/careers/index.asp;
- The Dr. Samuel D. Harris National Museum of Dentistry: www.dentalmuseum.org/;
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/;
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health: www.nih.gov. ■

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"For the Dental Patient" provides general information on dental treatments to dental patients. It is designed to prompt discussion between dentist and patient about treatment options and does not substitute for the dentist's professional assessment based on the individual patient's needs and desires.