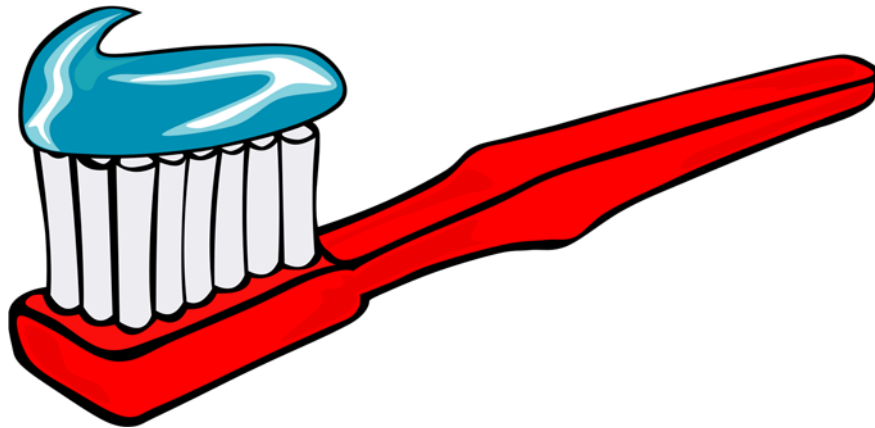


# A Brush with History

Linda Ruggieri



You know it is important to brush your teeth with a toothbrush to keep them healthy. But how did people clean their choppers before toothbrushes were invented?

The first tooth cleaners were thin twigs called chew sticks. The sticks were fuzzy at one end. A person rubbed the chew stick against his or her teeth to keep them clean.

About two hundred years ago, William Addis invented something closer to today's toothbrush. He collected thick animal hairs called bristles. He attached the hairs to a handle made from animal bone. Addis found that lots of customers wanted his invention.

People still wanted to improve the tooth cleaner, however. Animal hairs did not feel great against human teeth! Finally, man-made bristles were created. They were made out of nylon. Then plastic was used for handles. Now toothbrushes could be made quickly and cheaply. Millions were sold.

About fifty years ago, the electric toothbrush was invented. It does a great job of cleaning teeth. Today, we have toothbrushes with soft or hard bristles. There are sizes for adults, children, and babies.

Tooth cleaners have come a long way since chew sticks. Who knows what kind of tooth cleaner will be invented in the future?

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why is it important to brush your teeth with a toothbrush?

- A) to keep your teeth from growing too fast
- B) to make your teeth grow quickly
- C) to keep your teeth healthy

2. The article describes different items people have used to clean their teeth. What is one of these items?

- A) a thin twig with plastic bristles on it
- B) an animal bone with hairs attached to it
- C) choppers made out of wood and nylon

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"You know it is important to brush your teeth with a toothbrush to keep them healthy. But how did people clean their choppers before toothbrushes were invented?"

Based on these sentences, what can you conclude about the word "choppers"?

- A) The word "choppers" means healthy people.
- B) The word "choppers" means teeth.
- C) The word "choppers" means toothbrushes.

4. Read the third and fourth paragraphs of the article.

Based on those paragraphs, what can you conclude about how quickly the tooth cleaners invented by William Addis could be made?

- A) The tooth cleaners invented by William Addis could be made very quickly.
- B) The tooth cleaners invented by William Addis could not be made quickly.
- C) The tooth cleaners invented by William Addis could be made in two weeks.

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A) People used to clean their teeth by using twigs called chew sticks.
- B) William Addis collected animal hairs and attached them to a handle made from bone.
- C) The way people clean their teeth has changed over time.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"Tooth cleaners have come a long way since chew sticks. Who knows what kind of tooth cleaner will be invented in the future?"

What does the phrase "come a long way" mean here?

- A) changed a lot
- B) learned a lot
- C) traveled a great distance

7. Choose the answer that best completes this sentence.

People wanted to improve the tooth cleaner that had animal hairs on it \_\_\_\_\_ animal hairs did not feel good against human teeth.

- A) so
- B) because
- C) but

8. Explain what were chew sticks and how people used them to keep their teeth clean.

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9. What was invented about fifty years ago and does a great job of cleaning teeth?

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10. What has been the biggest improvement made to tooth cleaners from the time of chew sticks to today? Support your answer with evidence from the article.

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