

Name _____ Date _____

Chewing Gum

Chewing gum is made from a gum base. In the past, the gum base was usually the sap or resin from trees. Today, the base consists of manmade polymers. A polymer is formed when many units of a simple chemical are repeated and then joined together using pressure or some kind of catalyst.

To make the gum sweet and chewy, natural or artificial sugars, vegetable oil and flavorings are added. The warmth of a person's mouth makes the hard piece of gum soft and chewy. The base of bubble gum is more elastic than regular gum and that is why people can blow large bubbles with it.

Chewing gum has been around for thousands of years. Stone Age people chewed birch bark tar, which forms when the bark is heated. Scientists have found prehistoric samples of this tar with human teeth marks in them. Since most of these marks are small, they think the tar was chewed mainly by children and teenagers. They may have chewed it to relieve a sore throat, to make their mouth feel fresher, or simply because it tasted good.

The ancient Maya Indians of Mexico chewed chicle, which is the sap of the sapodilla tree. Natural chicle was the basis of Chiclets gum, which was invented by American Henry Fleeer in 1906. Fleeer added a sugar coating to the chicle to make it taste better.

The history of chewing gum in North America began with the Native people, who chewed the sap of spruce trees. Settlers learned the habit from them. From about 1850 to 1930, several American inventors worked to improve the quality and flavor of gum. In 1871, Thomas Adams invented a machine that would make gum, and in 1888 in New York City, gum was sold for the first time in a vending machine. Today, people all over the world chew gum.

1. What is gum made from?
 - a. It is made from sugar coating.
 - b. It is made from a gum base.
 - c. It is made from spruce trees.
 - d. It is made from Mexico.

2. How do they make gum sweet and chewy?
 - a. They add sugar, oil and flavorings.
 - b. They add polymers.
 - c. They add gum and water.
 - d. They add cherries.

3. What makes the gum soft and chewy?
 - a. Water makes it soft and chewy.
 - b. Ice cream makes it soft and chewy.
 - c. Chiclets makes it soft and chewy.
 - d. A warm mouth makes it soft and chewy.