

Candy Spine Recipe

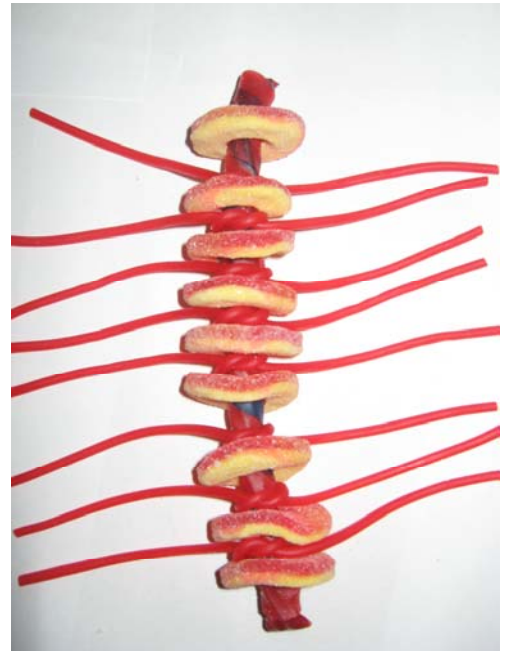
This fun learning activity (and delicious treat) is a great supplementary activity to neuroscience lessons for elementary students aged (6-12).

Supplies:

- Licorice sticks (like Twizzlers) for the spinal cord
- Fruit roll-ups for the dura of the spine
- Pull-apart licorice for individual spinal nerves
- Peach rings for vertebrae
- Disposable gloves to handle candy (optional)
- Plastic baggies (for candy storage)

Objective:

The goal here is to build an anatomical model of the spinal cord. While assembling the candy spine, instructors should talk through the anatomical relevance of each part of the spinal cord, its fragility and the importance of protecting the spinal cord from damage. This activity should supplement other lessons in neuroanatomy.



Directions:

- Wrap the fruit roll-up around a single stick of licorice. The fruit roll-up acts as the dura which helps protect the spinal cord. Remind students that the spinal cord in adults is about 17 inches long, so this is a much smaller version. The spinal cord is much softer than licorice – it feels like a banana or cooked spaghetti noodle. It needs to be protected because it is very delicate and cannot be fixed if it is injured (reference injuries that can be mended such as a cast on a broken arm or stitches for a wound).
- Place peach rings along the spine. These are the vertebrae or bones of the spinal column. The spinal cord runs through the vertebrae just as the licorice runs through the peach rings. Although only a few peach rings will fit along the licorice, remind students that the human spine is comprised of 33 vertebrae.
- Separate the pull-apart licorice into individual strands. Tie them in between each peach ring. These represent the spinal nerves, sending and receiving messages throughout the body. There are 31 pairs of spinal nerves in the central nervous system, each having a unique function to a specific part of the body. Damage to one of these nerves may mean you lose that function. Ask students for examples of what the spinal cord – and these nerves might control – like walking or breathing.

Injury Prevention Reinforcement Questions:

- 1) If the spinal cord is hurt can it be fixed?
- 2) What are some ways of protecting the spinal cord from injury?

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