Caries, better known as cavities, is one of the most common diseases of the teeth. The calcified tissue becomes demineralized, resulting in a cavity. In severe cases the tooth’s pulp is exposed and sometimes it becomes infected or abscessed.

The factors responsible for caries are not well understood but soft foods and carbohydrate-rich diets have been implicated. Apparently foods that stick to the teeth, particularly processed carbohydrates (like corn that has been ground and cooked), encourage certain bacteria to flourish and produce acids that break down the tooth. Tables 1a and 1b (on the second page of this handout) show the number and percentages of children, adolescents, and adults by the type of cavities they had.

Procedure
1. Review and graph the data.
2. Analyze the data for what it reveals about the health of each community.
3. Use the information on this page and what you have learned from the data to answer the questions listed.

Questions
Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.
1. What do you notice about the distribution of cavities in children?
2. What do you notice about the frequency of total cavities between the two groups?
3. What conclusions could you draw from this data and the information you have been given?
4. Write down any other observations you have about this data set.