

## Problem Solvers 19 Dental Trauma What Should I Know?

Synonyms: Knocked out teeth, fractured teeth.

When dental trauma occurs it can be very scary. The need to assess the damage calmly and take proper steps can help prevent further damage, save teeth and save people thousands of dollars.

Dental Trauma! What should I know?

Dental accidents occur every day. Children can fall on playgrounds, adults can get punched and accidents can occur in cars or due to slippery bathroom floors. This article will break down the most frequent traumas and give instruction as to what can be done.

Lacerations: When there is bleeding due to a trauma, it can happen to a persons lips, tongue, teeth, gums or soft tissue. If there is a laceration or cut, the first thing to do is to apply pressure to the cut to stop the bleeding. This can be done with a finger, a clean cloth or gauze or a bandage. Then you can go to the emergency room or your physician to see if a steri-strip, stitches, or special skin glue is indicated. Certainly for small cuts, if the bleeding stops and the skin appears to close, seeking out advanced care may not be necessary.

My daughter fell and her lip ripped up and she started bleeding from her mouth- what do I do?

This may be due to a torn frenum, which is the flap of tissue that connects the lip to the gum tissue in the mouth. There can be a lot of blood, so applying pressure and then ice will help to stop the blood flow. If the bleeding doesn't stop, go to seek medical assistance.

It is important to evaluate the cut to see if it is a through and through cut or is self-limited. Sometimes there may be foreign bodies in the cut. This could include teeth or pieces of tooth, rocks or sand, glass or anything else that was involved in the trauma. So if there is any question the area needs to be x-rayed and cleaned and dressed in a health care facility.

I got my tooth knocked out, what should I do! Can it be saved?

First, find the tooth. Next, do not wipe it off unless it is very dirty and can be gently washed off. You should try to hold the crown of the tooth not the root! The root has remnants of the periodontal ligament and this is the key to successfully saving the tooth.

If you are able to put it back in the socket quickly and are comfortable doing this, it can be put into the socket and pressed into place. Then go to the dentist to have x-rays and evaluate the bone and soft tissues in the area.

I am not comfortable putting my tooth back in what should I do?

Place it in milk, saline or get a kit at the drugstore called, "Save-a-tooth" that has the nutrients necessary to keep the tooth hydrated with some nutrition for the damaged cells in the tooth. The solution in Save-A-Tooth is called Hank's balanced salt solution and it contains calcium, phosphate, glucose and calcium that can help protect the tooth and keep it alive until you can get to the dentist.

What shouldn't I do to a tooth that was knocked out?

Do not wipe the tooth, scrub it or put it in your mouth or in a glass of water. These will all damage or infect the tooth with bacteria and change the osmotic gradient or fluid flow in the tooth. Then go to the dentist. The ability to save the tooth is greatest if it can be reinserted within the first 15 minutes after avulsion. For each hour you wait to go in to replace the tooth, the success rate goes down drastically. While many people have been told to put the tooth in the mouth to protect it, the bacteria present in the mouth that are exposed to the root may contaminate it and the socket. It is important to keep the tooth wet-in saline, milk or save-a tooth and get to the dentist within an hour.

My child knocked out a baby tooth, should it be put back it?

No, baby teeth should not be pushed back into the socket.

My child chipped their tooth what should I do?

Save the fragment as mentioned above and see the dentist. There may be an opportunity to bond the broken fragment back on. Gauze can be used if there is any bleeding and ice can be used to help decrease swelling to the area. Store the broken chip in cold milk or Save-A-Tooth but do not transport it dry.

Whenever there is trauma, the tooth may require having the nerve removed- a root canal. The dentist will evaluate the extent of the fracture and evaluate the nerve of the tooth over a period of months to ascertain whether the tooth may remain vital and alive. The use of a vitality test like ice to see if a tooth is alive or not cannot be done at the time of fracture, as the tooth will be in shock and such tests won't be accurate.

My tooth is loose but not cracked, what will the dentist do?

They will evaluate if the tooth has shifted or the surrounding bone has been fractured. They may adjust your bite by gently removing some enamel on the opposing tooth or they may splint this tooth to other healthy teeth to allow the tooth to stabilize and heal. Then the splint will be removed in 10 days or so and the tooth will be monitored to see if it will stabilize. Sometimes brackets and braces or bars are used to splint these teeth together for longer periods of time as determined by your dentist.

Richard B. Winter D.D.S. M.A.G.D. D.I.C.O.I.  
Master Academy of General Dentistry  
Diplomate International Congress of Oral Implantologists  
[WWW.WINTERDENTAL.COM](http://WWW.WINTERDENTAL.COM)