

Dental Emergencies

Be Prepared

Knowing how to handle a dental emergency can mean the difference between saving and losing your child's tooth. Here are some tips to help you cope quickly and calmly with a dental emergency.

Knocked-Out Tooth

Baby tooth

- If something happens to any of a child's primary (baby) teeth, you should **take your child to the dentist as soon as you can**. If a tooth is completely out, do not try to put it back into the tooth socket. Although it is normal for children to lose primary teeth, an accident that damages a primary tooth could also harm the permanent (adult) tooth underneath.

Adult tooth

- Unlike a baby tooth that is knocked out, an adult tooth should be put back into the socket. After you find the tooth, hold it by the crown (top), not the root. If the tooth looks dirty, rinse the root briefly with water. **Do not** scrub the tooth or remove any attached bits of tissue.
- If possible, gently insert and hold the tooth in its socket with a clean washcloth or gauze pad. If this isn't possible, see if the child can hold the tooth under his or her tongue. If that does not work either, put the tooth in a container with milk, saliva, saline (salt) solution, or an emergency tooth preservation kit. If none of those liquids are available, put the tooth in water.
- **Take your child to the dentist as quickly as you can.** It's best to see a dentist within 30 minutes. Don't forget to bring the tooth and any tooth pieces you can find!

Broken or Cracked Tooth

Rinse the mouth with warm water to keep the area clean. Put a cold compress (like an ice pack or a washcloth with ice wrapped inside) on the face to reduce swelling. Go to the dentist right away. If you can find the broken tooth piece, bring it with you to the dentist. Wrap it in some wet gauze or a wet towel if possible.

Bitten Tongue or Lip

Clean the area gently with a cloth and place a cold compress on the area to keep swelling down. If there is a lot of bleeding or if it doesn't stop after a short time, take your child to a dentist or an emergency center.

Objects Caught Between Teeth

Gently try to remove the object with dental floss. If that does not work, go to the dentist. Do not try to remove the object with a sharp or pointed instrument.

Toothache or Swollen Face

Rinse the mouth with warm water to clean it out. Give your child what you would normally give him or her for pain. **Do not** put aspirin directly on the aching tooth or gums. Take your child to the dentist as soon as you can. If your child's face is swollen, take your child to your dentist or physician. Swelling of the face can be a sign of serious infection.

Possible Broken Jaw

Apply a cold compress to control swelling. Take your child to the dentist or an emergency center right away.

If a Dental Emergency Happens While You Are Traveling

- Go to www.mouthhealthy.org on the Internet and click on "ADA Find-a-Dentist" to find an ADA member dentist near you.
- Ask the local hospital or dental society to recommend a dentist. To find a local dental society, go to www.ada.org/localorganizations.aspx.
- Ask a hotel concierge or other hotel staff to refer you to a dentist.
- If you are out of the country, contact the U.S. Embassy. Many embassies and consulates keep lists of local medical and dental staff, which may also be available online at www.usembassy.gov. After clicking on the country you are visiting, medical listings are usually found under the heading "U.S. Citizen Services."