

TIPS FOR PARENTS IN A DENTAL EMERGENCY

For a parent, seeing a child lose a tooth in an accident can be a traumatic experience. Such injuries are often bloody and can be mentally traumatic for the child as well. Knowing how to prevent dental injury and what to do in case an accident occurs can save your child's teeth.

All teeth, even baby teeth, are important. Many parents are under the false impression that baby teeth are less important because they will eventually be replaced.

This is definitely not true. Baby teeth serve several important functions including, acting as spacers creating enough room in the jaw so that permanent teeth can come in properly, aiding in proper speech, and serving to help build self-esteem in the newly independent child.

What To Do in Case of an Emergency

One of the most important things you can do as a parent to protect these precious baby teeth is to make sure that you are prepared before an accident ever occurs.

The most common dental emergencies include:

Teeth that have been knocked out due to trauma and

Teeth that have been chipped as a result of an accident. In either case, it is important to know what to do.

Time is of utmost importance when a tooth is knocked out. If the tooth is re-implanted within one hour its chances of survival are good. Rinse the tooth off and place it in a cup of saline (contact lens solution) or milk. Call us immediately.

With chipped teeth there are more possibilities to consider. If your child is experiencing pain or sensitivity in the affected tooth, see a dentist immediately as this indicates the tooth nerve may be injured. The dentist can perform a root canal or other necessary procedure to save the tooth. If the tooth is mobile, it may need to be splinted. Also, a porcelain crown or bonding may be necessary to restore the tooth.

If your child's tooth is knocked out:

Carefully rinse the tooth in water. Make sure that you do not touch the root of the tooth with your hands. The root is the portion of the tooth embedded in the gum and not normally seen.

Place it in a glass containing either saline or milk.

See your dentist immediately.

If your child's tooth is chipped:

Check to see if your child is experiencing pain, sensitivity or looseness (mobility) in the tooth. If so call us and seek dental treatment immediately.

If your child is not experiencing pain or sensitivity, contact your dentist to see whether or not your child should be seen. In most cases, this will not require immediate attention and your dentist will schedule your child for an appointment.

Preventing Dental Injuries

The best way to prevent a dental emergency is to properly protect your child. Once only used in football and ice hockey, mouth guards are now recommended and available for almost all sports including rollerblading, basketball, and soccer. Most mouth guards are made of plastic and cover the upper teeth.

Not only do mouth guards protect teeth but they also protect lips, gums, and cheeks. Commonly there are two types of mouth guards:

Semi-formable mouth guards are available in sporting good and drug stores. These mouth guards can be heated in boiling water to allow them to be molded to fit the teeth. They are cheaper than custom made mouth guards but do not fit your teeth as accurately.

Custom made mouth guards are made by a dentist. The dentist creates a mold of the teeth which is used to create the mouth guard. Consequently, these mouth guards fit more securely against the teeth affording the best protection.

Common situations that cause dental injuries:

Trips and Falls - Falling into furniture and down stairs often causes dental injury. This is most likely to occur when children are first learning to stand using furniture to maintain balance.

Children who are just learning to walk also have a tendency to fall down - often onto household furniture or other items. If you have an infant make sure to child-proof your home before they become mobile, usually around 12 - 16 months.

Water Fountains - Often kids injure teeth by ramming them into the spout of water fountains as they drink. Sometimes kids behind them accidentally (or purposely) bump into them causing them to injure their teeth.

Forks and Spoons - Believe it or not, some injuries are self-inflicted when people, not paying attention, crack or chip their teeth with spoons or forks as they eat.

Bottle Caps - Tell your child to never attempt to open a bottle cap by using their teeth.