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The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) is pleased to make this publication available to our member dentists as a way of communicating important oral health information to their patients.

Information in **WORD OF MOUTH** articles comes from dental health care professionals of the MDS and other leading professional dental organizations, including the American Dental Association. If you have any questions about specific content that may affect your oral health, please contact your dentist. For timely news regarding oral health, visit the "For the Public" section of the MDS Web site at www.massdental.org.

Your comments and suggestions regarding **WORD OF MOUTH** are always welcome. All correspondence and requests for additional copies may be forwarded to Melissa Carman, Managing Editor, c/o Massachusetts Dental Society, Two Willow Street, Suite 200, Southborough, MA 01745-1027, or email mcarman@massdental.org.

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Robert E. Boose, EdD, *Executive Director*

Melissa Carman, *Managing Editor*

Bethann Dacey, *Community Relations Coordinator*

Jessica Robinson, *Communications Assistant*

Scott G. Davis, *Chief Communications Officer*

Jeanne M. Burdette, *Manager, Graphic Design*

Shelley Padgett, *Graphic Designer*

Bill Donnelly, *Contributing Writer*

Susan Swiderski, *Contributing Writer*



Note from the Managing Editor

You may notice that **WORD OF MOUTH** has a new look. In addition to creating a new logo, the MDS Communications Department has redesigned the entire publication to give **WORD OF MOUTH** a more modern look and feel. We hope you find this new design inviting and, as a result, it encourages you to learn more about your oral health.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Let us know what you think about **WORD OF MOUTH**'s new look. Email your comments to Managing Editor Melissa Carman, mcarman@massdental.org, or call (800) 342-8747, ext. 260.



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In the Event of an Emergency . . .

One minute, you're running your usual three-miler, or carrying a box of books into your new home, or climbing on the jungle gym, or tossing a baseball back and forth with your brother. The next thing you know, you trip over an unseen crack in the sidewalk, or stumble on the top step, or lose your grip on the monkey bars, or misjudge a fast pitch, and you have a dental injury. There's possibly blood, perhaps a loose or knocked-out tooth, and maybe even some tears. Besides picking yourself up and dusting yourself off, what do you do? Because many dental injuries need immediate attention, the following guidelines from the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) can help you effectively deal with a dental emergency:

Broken Tooth or Filling

Immediately rinse your mouth with warm water to clean the area. If swelling occurs, placing cold compresses or ice packs on the face may help. Many pharmacies sell material to temporarily fill the space created by the broken tooth or filling; however, this material may be harmful if left in place too long, so it's important to contact your dentist immediately.

Knocked-out Tooth

Hold the tooth by the crown, making sure to gently rinse the root of the tooth in water if it is dirty. Do not scrub the tooth or remove any attached tissue fragments, as you can damage cells that are necessary for reattaching the tooth to the bone. If possible, gently replant the tooth back into the socket or place it in the space between your teeth and gums. If those options are not possible, put the tooth in a cup of milk or water, or wrap the tooth in a clean, saline-soaked piece of gauze. Do not allow the tooth to dry out, and get to the dentist as quickly as possible, because reimplantation within 30 minutes has the best rate of success. Ibuprofen may help ease pain and discomfort, but be sure to avoid aspirin, which is an anticoagulant that could cause excessive bleeding during a dental trauma.

Bitten Tongue or Lip

Clean the area gently with a cloth and apply cold compresses to keep the swelling down. If bleeding is excessive or does not stop in a short period of time, go to the dentist or a hospital emergency room; be sure to avoid taking aspirin, which could worsen bleeding. Even if the bleeding stops, you will want to make sure the injury is treated properly because the area could easily become infected.

Toothache

Rinse the mouth with warm water to clean the tooth. Use dental floss to remove any food particles that may be trapped between the teeth. See a dentist as soon as possible because the pain could be a sign of something more serious, such as root damage. Ibuprofen may help ease tooth pain until you can get to the dentist.

Foreign Object Between the Teeth

Gently try to remove the object with dental floss. If that does not work, contact your dentist immediately. Do not, under any circumstances, try to remove the object with a sharp or pointed instrument, such as a knife or scissors. You could cause damage to your gums that could lead to infection.

Broken or Possibly Broken Jaw

Regardless of the extent of the injury, all jaw and orofacial injuries should be taken very seriously. Apply ice or a cold compress to control any swelling, and immediately go to the hospital emergency room.

To avoid dental injuries, the MDS recommends the following **Do's**:

- Do avoid chewing ice, popcorn kernels, or hard candy, all of which are known to crack teeth.
- Do not cut or rip things, such as tape or sealed packages, with your teeth. You risk breaking or chipping your teeth, not to mention getting something caught between your teeth.
- Do always wear a mouthguard when participating in contact sports to avoid risk of injury to your teeth, lips, tongue, and jaw.

