

Ah, summertime. Staying at that bed-and-breakfast near the beach. Camping on the shores of a pristine lake. A road trip to the Midwest to ride every rollercoaster between here and there. As summer vacation travel kicks into high gear, it's always important to pack for emergencies: a flashlight for the car, extra food and water,



**Wax.** If by chance an orthodontic bracket or wire breaks, be sure to have dental wax close by. An orthodontist should be seen right away, but until then, wax will temporarily cover any sharp edges that are sticking out. All orthodontic patients are given dental wax to relieve soreness and irritation associated with having braces, so ask for a little extra before leaving on vacation.

**Floss.** It's important to floss every day, so floss should be packed automatically for vacation. But if something gets lodged between your teeth, do not use a sharp or pointed instrument—such as a toothpick—to remove it. Instead, use your floss to gently try to remove the object. If that doesn't work, contact a dentist.

**Your dentist's phone number.** If you're traveling, it's always a smart move to have your dentist's phone number and pager number with you. Even better, tell your dentist ahead of time where you're traveling; he or she may be able to rec-

## A First Aid Kit for Your Mouth

and, certainly, a first aid kit. While many vacationers pack for a "just in case" medical emergency, many travelers are ill equipped for a dental emergency.

As upsetting as a dental emergency is at home, it may be even more disruptive and stressful when you're traveling and unprepared. According to the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS), packing some "in case of a dental emergency" items is something to consider. Here are a couple of things that the MDS recommends you have handy while traveling:

**Salt.** There's nothing like a toothache to ruin a vacation. And if a toothache occurs, a good first step is to rinse with warm saltwater. This may help dislodge trapped food or debris, which may be causing the toothache. Small packets of salt are easily packed and can even be found in most fast-food restaurants. Acetaminophen pain products will help with a toothache, too. If the toothache persists, however, contact a dentist immediately.

**Temporary filling material.** You never know when or where you might lose a filling, and having temporary filling material on hand will not only relieve discomfort, but will also keep food away from the now-exposed cavity. Temporary filling material is sold over the counter and is available at most local drugstores. But even if you use a filling material, it's still critical to get to a dentist as soon as possible. If the filling material is left in place too long, it may be harmful. And if you've just had crown or bridge work done before you set out on your trip, ask your dentist about temporary cement, which you can use should your crown or bridge become dislodged.

ommend a dentist in the area in the event that a dental emergency should arise. This is an especially good idea if you've just had extensive treatment done before you plan to head out of town.

If you don't have your dentist's phone number handy, the MDS recommends calling information or looking in the phone book for the state or local dental society's phone number in the area you'll be visiting to obtain a referral for a dentist in that area.

The chances of a dental emergency occurring on vacation are slim, but when it does happen, it can ruin an otherwise relaxing vacation. So it never hurts to be prepared, just in case. ●

