

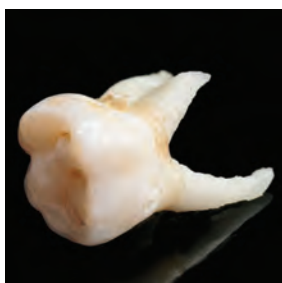
Dealing with a **DENTAL EMERGENCY**

Let's face it: Accidents will happen. You're walking down the street and you trip on the curb and fall face-first onto the sidewalk. Your car gets rear-ended and your face hits the airbag or steering wheel. You're playing an informal game of soccer in the yard with your pals and the game abruptly ends when you take a soccer ball to the mouth. The initial shock from the trauma wears off, but you're left with blood in your mouth and a dislodged tooth in your hand (and possibly some tears). What should you do? Saving a tooth depends entirely on what is done within the first 30 to 60 minutes, and the following guidelines will 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 a 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 touch the roots! Also, do not scrub the tooth or remove any attached tissue fragments, as you could damage cells that are necessary for reattaching the tooth to the bone. If rinsing with water does not remove dirt, leave the dirt in place. Again, do not touch or scrub the roots! If possible, replant the tooth by biting down gently on a towel or handkerchief. If this doesn't work, put the tooth in a small container of cold milk (if milk is not available, you can use water; milk is better, though) or wrap the tooth in clean, saline-soaked gauze—do not allow the tooth to dry out.



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 after a short period of time, go to the dentist, an urgent care clinic, or the emergency room. Even if the bleeding stops, you want to make sure the injury is treated properly, because the area could easily become infected. If the bleeding doesn't stop, avoid taking aspirin, which could cause excessive bleeding.



TOOTHACHE

At home, you can floss to rule out pain caused by trapped food, rinse with salt water, and take ibuprofen as needed, but most importantly, call your dentist for proper diagnosis and treatment.



FOREIGN OBJECT BETWEEN THE TEETH

Gently try to remove the object with dental floss. If that doesn't 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.



JAW INJURIES

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.

While you can't always avoid accidents (they wouldn't call them "accidents" if you could), you can be prepared to react to any dental injuries and turn those tears to smiles.