
First Aid: Teeth Injuries

If your child prematurely loses a baby tooth, there's no need to try to replace it. But if a permanent tooth is dislodged, it's a dental emergency. Permanent teeth have the best chance of survival if replaced within 15 minutes. So it's important to act quickly and follow the guidelines below.

Many other dental injuries are less urgent, but may need to be looked at by a dentist. Most dental injuries in preschool and school-age kids occur from falls, while dental injuries in teens are often sports related.

What to Do

If a baby, toddler, or young child injures the gums or baby teeth:

1. Apply pressure to the area (if it's bleeding) with a piece of cold, wet gauze. If your child is old enough to follow directions, ask him or her to bite down on the gauze.
2. Offer an ice pop to suck on to reduce swelling, or hold an ice-pack wrapped in a washcloth to the cheek.
3. Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen as needed for pain.
4. Call a dentist.
5. Watch for swelling of the gums, pain, fever, or a change in the color of the tooth.

If a permanent tooth is chipped or broken:

1. Collect all pieces of the tooth.
2. Rinse the mouth with warm water.
3. Call a dentist right away to schedule a visit.

Seek Medical Care

If a Permanent Tooth Is Knocked Out:

Go to the dentist or emergency room **right away** after following these steps:

1. Find the tooth. Call a dentist or emergency room right away if you aren't sure if it's a permanent tooth (baby teeth have smooth edges).
2. Hold the tooth by the crown (the "chewing" end of the tooth) — **not** the root.
3. Place the tooth in a balanced salt solution (a commercially available sterile product), if you have it. If not, place the tooth in a container of milk or your child's saliva. You also can place the tooth between your lower lip and gum. **Do not store it in tap water.**
4. For older kids and teens, try placing the tooth back in the socket without touching the root. Have your child bite down on gauze to help keep it in place.
5. If the tooth is stored in a container (rather than back in the socket), have your child bite down on a gauze pad or handkerchief to relieve bleeding and pain.

Think Prevention!

Make sure kids wear mouthguards and protective gear for contact sports and helmets while biking, skateboarding, and inline skating. Childproof your house to prevent falls.

Note: All information on KidsHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

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