Tooth Trauma

Quick action is crucial to saving the life of an injured tooth. Teeth are remarkably resilient, but can be chipped, fractured or broken when quick, strong impact occurs. Today's advanced dental care makes it possible to repair or replace injured teeth if care is obtained within a certain amount of time.

Tooth trauma is very common, particularly among children. In fact, one-third of 5-year-olds suffer injury to their primary (baby) teeth, and one-fourth of 12-year-olds suffer injury to their permanent teeth.[1] Baby teeth are responsible for creating space for the adult teeth, helping to develop clear speech and keeping the permanent teeth healthy underneath. That's why taking precautionary steps with an injured baby tooth is just as important as a permanent tooth.



Protecting teeth from injury isn't always possible, but knowing what to do after trauma occurs can increase the chance of saving the tooth (see tips on reverse side).

Including preventive measures such as wearing a mouthguard during sports-related activities can help decrease the chances of tooth trauma and keep teeth happy and healthy.

Did you know?

A tooth that has been knocked out only has 60 minutes to survive if kept in a dry environment.[2]

Quick bites

Follow these steps if a tooth is chipped, broken or knocked out:

- **Be prepared for an emergency** by keeping the phone number of your dentist handy.
- If possible, **find all parts of the tooth** and handle it by the top. Do not touch the root.
- **Do not clean or handle the tooth** more than necessary.
- **Put the tooth back into the tooth socket** if your child can hold it there without swallowing it. If not, place the tooth in a cup of milk to help prevent it from drying out.
- If the injury involves braces or wires, **cover sharp or protruding portions** with cotton balls, gauze or dental wax. **Do not remove any wires** stuck into the gums, cheek or tongue.
- **Get to a dentist** as quickly as possible.

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1. Andreasen JO and Andreasen FM, *Textbook and Color Atlas of Traumatic Injuries to the Teeth*, (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1994). **2.** Andersson, L et al., "International Association of Dental Traumatology Guidelines for the Management of Traumatic Dental Injuries," *Dental Traumatology* 28, no. 2 (2012): 88–96.

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