

## Dental Emergencies: Trauma to Permanent Teeth

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### **What should I do if I have trauma to a permanent (adult) tooth?**

If you or your child are in an accident and injure or lose a tooth, please see a dentist as soon as a possible. The first 30 minutes after the trauma are the most important for treatment success.

### **What should I do if my tooth was knocked out and/or fractured?**

If a permanent tooth is knocked out of your mouth, hold the tooth from the crown (top portion of the tooth, **not** the root), gently rinse (**do not** scrub) the tooth under water. Replace the tooth back in the socket, if possible.

If unable to replace the tooth in the socket, you may temporarily store the tooth under your tongue or by the inside of your cheek, however, this may lead to accidental swallowing or choking and is only recommended if you may take extra caution to keep the tooth in a safe position. Alternative options include storing the tooth in Hanks' Balanced Salt Solution (preferred but not often readily available), a glass of milk, or a clean, wet cloth. Regardless of storage option, go to the dentist's office **immediately**. If the tooth is fractured, please bring all pieces of the tooth with you.

While at the dentist, your dentist may replace the tooth in the socket and splint the tooth to adjacent teeth with a wire so that the tooth does not move and has a chance to heal. If the tooth is fractured your dentist may repair your tooth and provide additional treatments depending on the extent of damage.

### **What are my post-op dental trauma instructions?**

- **Pain management:** Over-the-counter ibuprofen and/or Tylenol may be used to help manage discomfort. Make sure to follow dosing instructions and do

not exceed maximum recommended amounts. Please take with food and water.

- **Diet:** Maintain a soft diet.
  - Depending on the severity of the injury, you may need to limit your diet to only soft foods for the next several weeks. Follow your dentist's recommended timeline.
  - Avoid using the injured teeth as much as possible, especially for biting or tearing. Cut up foods so that the foods are easier to chew.
- **Mouthcare:** Make sure that your mouth is extremely clean which will aid the healing process.
  - In order to reduce further trauma to teeth and for your comfort, run your soft-bristled toothbrush under warm water to make it softer before brushing.
  - If you have a splint placed, make sure to keep the splint clean by brushing gently around the splint and being careful not to cause the splint to dislodge.
  - If the splint becomes loose, please contact your dentist immediately as the splint may have sharp edges and your tooth may move without the splint in place. **Never attempt to replace or remove splint on your own.**
- **Sports/Activities:** Avoid any activities that may put you at risk for bleeding and/or additional trauma to teeth.

## **What may happen to the injured teeth?**

The injured tooth may:

1. Change color- An injured tooth may turn dark. This may indicate that the nerve (pulp) of the tooth is dying.
2. Become sensitive or lose sensation- Nerve cells may be more sensitive or no longer able to sense hot or cold. If the teeth are sensitive, try to limit food and beverages to room temperature.

3. Become infected (abscess)- Watch for a bump in the gums or draining liquid from the around the tooth which may indicate that the tooth has an infection requiring prompt treatment.
4. Become mobile or loose- Your tooth may need time before it is stable in the socket again.
  - If the dentist has placed a splint to keep the tooth in position, make sure to follow your dentist instructions including follow-up timeline. Depending on the amount of trauma, the tooth may able to become stable or may become more loose. If the splint becomes loose or falls off while you are healing, it is important to contact your dentist as soon as possible. **The splint is very important to try to help your tooth heal.** As mentioned above, **never try to repair the splint or remove the splint on your own.**

Your dentist will evaluate your tooth over time to see how the tooth changes as you are healing from your injury. If the tooth changes color, becomes sensitive or loses sensation, becomes infected, or becomes mobile, **endodontic therapy (root canal) or extraction (removing the tooth) may be necessary.**

### **What is my follow-up care?**

You may have several follow-ups over the next few weeks to months in order to assess how your tooth is healing from trauma. Your dentist will determine your follow-up care plan based on your individual needs. It may include:

- Splint evaluation and removal
- Restoration of tooth (filling) if not completed at time of initial visit
- Endodontic therapy (root canal therapy)
- Extraction (removal of tooth)
- Orthodontic treatment (braces) or space maintainer

To learn more about dental trauma visit the International Association of Dental Trauma's website at <https://www.iadt-dentaltrauma.org/for-patients.html> .

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask your dental team!

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