

Care post injury

After-care of injured/replanted knocked out teeth:

- Avoid participation in contact sports until you fully recover from the injury
- Have a soft diet for up to two weeks and then return to normal function as early as possible
- Brush teeth after every meal using a soft toothbrush
- Use mouthwash and other medications as advised by your dental practitioner
- Ensure you make/attend follow-up visits as recommended by your dental practitioner

Preventing dental injuries

1. If you play sport wear a mouthguard as this will provide the best protection for the teeth, lips and jaw. Also wear other protective equipment such as helmets, particularly in contact sports, as recommended. There are 3 types of mouth guards: over-the-counter, boil-and-bite and custom-fitted mouthguards.

Custom-fitted mouthguards are made by a dental practitioner to fit your mouth. They provide the best protection due to their close fit, comfort and cushioning effect. The Australian Dental Association does not recommend over-the-counter or boil-and-bite mouthguards as wearing these types of mouthguards offers only slightly better protection than wearing no mouthguard at all.



Figure 3: Wearing a mouth guard during sport

2. If you have protruded anterior teeth/inadequate lip coverage seek advice from your dental practitioner
3. Avoid/minimise exposure to risk-taking behaviours, unsafe playgrounds/footpaths etc (watch out for possible obstructions)
4. Avoid inappropriate use of teeth as a tool, e.g. trying to unscrew a bottle cap with your teeth
5. Take appropriate care to not damage teeth if getting an oral piercing
6. Wear seat belts, use appropriate child restraints and wear proper bicycle helmets to minimise dental injuries in the event of a traffic accident.

FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES

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DENTAL TRAUMA

Information for Patients
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Dental Trauma refers to injury to the teeth and/or periodontium (gums, periodontal ligament, alveolar bone), and nearby soft tissues such as the lips and tongue. Dental trauma can occur in people of all ages. Nobody plans to injure their teeth, but when it happens it is important to know what to do. Knowing what to do can reduce the impact of the trauma associated with the dental injury. The key thing is to act quickly – seek dental care as quickly as possible, ideally within 60 minutes.

What causes dental trauma?

- Protruded anterior teeth/inadequate lip coverage
- Risk taking behaviours, alcohol-related behaviours/binge drinking
- Unsafe environment: e.g., playgrounds etc.
- Obesity/overweight: obese/overweight individuals are more prone to falls
- Falls
- Sporting activities, in particular contact sports (for example football, rugby, soccer boxing, hockey, lacrosse)
- Impact events: collisions, motor vehicle traffic accidents, fights, assaults
- Inappropriate use of teeth as a tool to open bottles, fix electronic equipment, cut/hold objects
- Oral piercing
- Smart phone use: accidentally dropping such devices onto the face



Figure 1: Some causes of dental trauma

What should I do?

It's important to be aware that different actions are required depending on whether the injury is to a baby tooth or an adult tooth. It is important to take the appropriate action before you reach a dental practitioner because this can make all the difference to avoiding any long-term damage.

Dental injuries involving primary teeth

If a primary (baby) tooth is knocked out, it should not be replanted because this can potentially damage the developing permanent tooth. Instead you should:

1. Rinse the child's mouth with water and apply an ice-pack to reduce any swelling
2. If the tooth is not in the mouth, comfort the child rather than trying to look for it
3. Seek dental care immediately for the best outcome.

Dental injuries involving permanent teeth

If a permanent (adult) tooth is knocked out, you should:

1. Find the tooth – hold it by the crown only (white part), do not touch the root of the tooth (yellow part)
2. If the tooth is dirty rinse the tooth briefly (for approximately 10 seconds, do not scrub it) with cold water
3. Place the tooth back in position and make sure the tooth is facing the right way
4. Once the tooth is in position, gently bite down on a soft cloth or tissue to keep it in position
5. If you are unable to replant the tooth back into position, place the tooth in milk or saliva (the injured person can spit saliva into a cup or hold the tooth inside their cheek/ mouth making sure they do not swallow it). DO NOT place the tooth in water.
6. Seek dental care immediately for the best outcome.

Teeth can also be cracked, broken or become loose from accidents so it is important to seek dental care promptly. Cracks may not be visible so if you have experienced a knock to your tooth or mouth seek dental care to assess whether any damage has occurred to the tooth or its roots. There is a risk of infection, decay or loss of the tooth if a damaged tooth goes unchecked. If a tooth has been chipped, locate the chipped tooth fragment (if possible) and transport it in milk to your dental professional as they may be able to reattach it to the broken tooth.

What will the dental practitioner do?

Primary (baby) teeth

Treatment for injuries involving baby teeth focuses on preventing damage to future permanent teeth.

A baby tooth that has been knocked out completely should not be replanted because this risks damaging the growing permanent tooth.

If a baby tooth is broken the dental practitioner will determine if there has been any nerve or blood vessel damage to the tooth. Treatment may include smoothing any rough edges of the tooth, repairing the tooth with a restorative material, leaving the tooth in place, or removing it.

An injured baby tooth that becomes loose may be left in place. However, if it is interfering with the bite it may be removed. Usually a loose tooth heals without treatment. If the tooth is really loose and is likely to fall out or if it poses a choking hazard (risk of swallowing it while sleeping), then the tooth may be removed.

Permanent (adult) teeth

If permanent teeth are knocked out, there is an excellent chance that they will survive if they are immediately placed back in the tooth socket (within 30 minutes to an hour) and dental care is sought immediately. Every minute the tooth is out of the socket, the less chance it has of surviving.

The dentist usually splints the tooth to the surrounding teeth for 7 to 10 days. If the bone around the tooth also has been fractured, the tooth may have to be splinted for 6 to 10 weeks. Reimplanted teeth eventually need root canal treatment.

If an adult/permanent tooth is chipped, broken/cracked and the broken tooth fragment is available the dental practitioner can bond it to the tooth. If the broken tooth fragment is not available, or cannot be reattached, the dental practitioner can provide suitable restorative or other treatment depending on the extent of the injury.

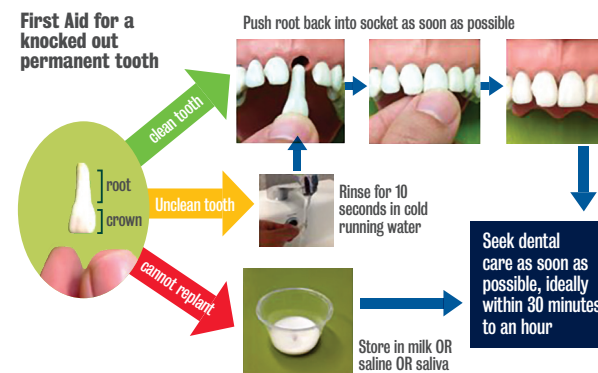


Figure 2: First aid for a knocked out permanent tooth