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Broken or knocked out tooth

The medical term for a knocked out tooth is "avulsed" tooth.

Considerations

A permanent (adult) tooth that is knocked out can sometimes be put back in place (replanted). In most cases, only permanent teeth are replanted into the mouth. Baby teeth are not replanted.

Causes

Tooth accidents are commonly caused by:

- Accidental falls
- Sports-related trauma
- Fighting
- Car accidents
- Biting on hard food

First Aid

Save any tooth that has been knocked out. Bring it to your dentist as soon as possible. The longer you wait, the less chance there is for your dentist to fix it. Hold the tooth only by the crown (chewing edge).

You can take the tooth to the dentist in one of these ways:

1. Try to place the tooth back in your mouth where it fell out, so it is level with other teeth. Bite down gently on a gauze or a wet tea bag to help keep it in place. Be careful not to swallow the tooth.
2. If you cannot do the above step, place the tooth in a container and cover it with a small amount of cow's milk or saliva.
3. You can also hold the tooth between your lower lip and gum or under your tongue.
4. A tooth-saving storage device (Save-a-Tooth, EMT Tooth Saver) may be available at your dentist's office. This type of kit contains a travel case and fluid solution. Consider buying one for your home first aid kit.

Also follow these steps:

1. Apply a cold compress on the outside of your mouth and gums to ease pain.

2. Apply direct pressure using gauze to control bleeding.

After your tooth has been replanted, you will most likely need a root canal to remove the cut nerve that is inside your tooth.

You may not need an emergency visit for a simple chip or a broken tooth that is not causing you discomfort. You should still have the tooth fixed to avoid sharp edges that can cut your lips or tongue.

DO NOT

If a tooth breaks or is knocked out:

1. Do not handle the roots of the tooth. Handle only the chewing edge -- the crown (top) portion of the tooth.
2. Do not scrape or wipe the root of the tooth to remove dirt.
3. Do not brush or clean the tooth with alcohol or peroxide.
4. Do not let the tooth dry out.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your dentist right away when a tooth is broken or knocked out. If you can find the tooth, bring it with you to the dentist. Follow the steps in the First Aid section above.

If you cannot close your upper and lower teeth together, your jaw may be broken. This requires medical help right away at a dentist's office or hospital.

Prevention

Follow these guidelines to prevent broken or knocked out teeth:

- Wear a mouth guard when playing any contact sport.
- Avoid fights.
- Avoid hard foods, such as bones, stale bread, tough bagels and unpopped popcorn kernels.
- Always wear a seatbelt.

Alternative Names

Teeth - broken, chipped, fractured; Tooth - knocked out

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