



Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,
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Q: *What are the procedures a parent should follow for dental injuries, such as a tooth being knocked out?*

A: This is probably a better topic for the beginning of summer, but I recall that in my general practice residency I had a lot of tooth avulsions (knocked out teeth) and dental fractures over Labor Day weekend. First of all, prevention is always the best medicine, and mouth guards are highly recommended for sporting activities. Realistically, they are probably not making an appearance in pick-up games and family picnics. So, when accidents happen, and tooth trauma occurs, certain steps should be followed. The International Association of Dental Traumatology set up guidelines for dentists and patients to follow. In all instances, seek dental treatment as soon as possible (preferably in less than 2 hours). !Primary teeth (baby teeth): If avulsed, Do Not Reinsert. Space can be maintained until the permanent tooth replaces it. If it is only pushed out of position (luxated), let your dentist determine the treatment. !Permanent teeth: If fractured, Find the piece(s) and place in water, saline, the patients saliva, or milk. The pieces can be cleaned off and re-glued to the remaining tooth for a more esthetic repair. If luxated, let your dentist determine the best treatment. If avulsed, 1) Find the tooth. Hold the tooth by the crown (the white part), not by the root (the yellow part). 2) Replant immediately, if possible But, If contaminated, first rinse shortly with cold tap water and put the tooth back in its place. This can be done by the child or an adult. 3) Hold the tooth in place with finger pressure or biting on a folded cloth, and go to the dentist immediately. 4) If you can not put the tooth back in the socket, place it in a cup of milk or saline. When milk or saline are not available, place the tooth in the child's mouth (between the cheeks and gums). NOTE: I do not advocate this, as it can be swallowed. I also feel that it is an unreasonable request for an already upset child. Have the child spit saliva into a cup or ziplock bag and place the tooth in that. The goal is to keep the tooth from drying out, and the more natural the moisture, the better the reimplantation success. 5) Seek knowledgeable dental treatment, immediately. !Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS, 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**