

DENTAL EMERGENCY GUIDE

The following information will help you respond to a child's dental emergency. In any dental emergency:

- Stay calm and reassure the child.
- Assess for a head injury first.
- Wear gloves with any bleeding injury.
- Notify the parent or guardian.

BLEEDING AFTER LOSING A PRIMARY (BABY) TOOTH

- Place a clean folded gauze pad, cloth or paper towel over the site to control any bleeding.
- Ask the child to bite on the gauze with pressure for 15 minutes.
- Repeat, if necessary. If bleeding continues, notify the parent or guardian.
- Do not attempt to reinsert the primary tooth.

INJURY TO LIPS, TONGUE, GUMS, OR CHEEKS

- Rinse the affected area with warm water.
- Control any bleeding.
- Apply a cold compress to the affected area to minimize bruising or swelling.
- Notify the parent or guardian.
- If the bleeding does not stop, or a tooth/teeth could be affected, arrange for the child to be transported to the dentist.



DISPLACED OR PARTIALLY DISLODGED TOOTH

- Gently clean the area with warm water.
- Control any bleeding.
- Do NOT attempt to move the tooth into the correct position.
- Notify the parent or guardian.
- Arrange for the child to be transported to the dentist immediately.



TOOTHACHE OR ABSCESS

- Rinse the mouth vigorously with warm water or salt water to dislodge any food or debris.
- Do NOT place aspirin at the toothache site as this may cause a chemical burn of the gum tissue.
- Notify the parent or guardian.



JAW DISLOCATION OR FRACTURE

- Immobilize the jaw by wrapping a scarf, necktie or towel under the chin and tie the ends securely over the head.
- Apply ice to control swelling and bleeding.
- Notify the parent or guardian and arrange for transportation to the emergency room.

AVULSED (KNOCKED OUT) TOOTH

A permanent tooth may be successfully replanted and saved if the child is transported to the dentist within one hour.



- Find the tooth and pick it up by its CROWN, not the root.
- If dirty, gently rinse the tooth with water.
- Do NOT scrub the tooth.
- Hold the tooth by the crown and gently reinsert the tooth back into the socket. Make sure to insert it facing the right direction!
- Have the child hold the tooth in the socket while being transported to the dentist by biting on a clean gauze pad or cloth.

If an avulsed tooth CANNOT be placed back into the socket:

- Place the tooth in a tooth preservation system, a cup of cold milk, the child's saliva, or water (as a last resort).
- Never wrap a tooth in gauze, cloth or tissue.
- Notify the parent or guardian.
- Arrange for the child to be transported to the dentist immediately.

CHIPPED OR BROKEN TOOTH

- Gently clean the area with warm water.
- Control any bleeding.
- Place a cold compress over the injured area.
- Attempt to find the broken tooth fragments and wrap them in a wet gauze pad or cloth.



BROKEN ORTHODONTIC BRACES OR OTHER APPLIANCES

- Broken wires can be covered with wax or a piece of clean wet gauze pad until the child can be seen by their orthodontist.
- Do NOT remove a wire if it is broken off and embedded in the cheeks, gum, or tongue.
- Notify the parent or guardian.
- Arrange for the child to be transported to their orthodontist immediately.



Adapted with permission from the New Jersey Department of Health. Several photos courtesy of Dr. Dennis McTigue.