

Dental Emergencies

by Scott F. Kenward, DMD

Murphy's Law of Dentistry states that the likelihood of a dental emergency increases dramatically on weekends, holidays and while away on vacation. But with a little knowledge and a bit of preparation, most dental patients can manage these little disasters with minimum panic and maximum chance for a successful outcome.

Avulsed Teeth

When a tooth is knocked out you should immediately call your dentist for an emergency appointment and attempt to find the tooth. If it's a permanent tooth, gently rinse it with plain water, but do not scrub the tooth to remove dirt or debris. Don't attempt to replace the tooth into the socket. This could cause further damage.

The best place to keep the tooth is in the mouth, between the cheek and gum, to keep it moist. But if that's not possible, wrap the tooth in a clean cloth or gauze and immerse in milk. Most importantly, get to the dentist as soon as possible. If it is within 30 minutes of the injury, it may be possible to save the tooth.

Extruded Teeth

If the tooth is pushed out of place (inward or outward), it should be gently pushed back to its normal position with very light finger pressure. Do not force the tooth into the socket. Hold the tooth in place with a moist tissue or gauze. Again, it is vital that a dentist see the injured individual within 30 minutes.

If You Lose a Filling

The main concern here is pain. Often there is none, but you can generally expect some mild to moderate temperature sensitivity as long as the tooth remains open. If you aren't in any pain, simply keep the area clean and see your dentist as soon as you can.

If it hurts, an over-the-counter temporary filling/pain reliever such as Dentemp O.S. may be applied into the cavity. Use the enclosed applicator and follow the directions carefully. This should minimize the pain until you can get to a dentist.

Never put an aspirin on your tooth or gum. Aspirin is an acid and can burn the tissue.

If a Cap or a Crown Falls Off

Coat the inside of the cap or crown with petroleum jelly or Dentemp O.S. and gently place it back on the tooth. See your dentist as soon as you can.

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If Wires on Braces Break

Ideally, cover the sharp end of the broken wire with a small piece of soft dental wax. Your dentist or orthodontist can provide this material for you. If you don't have any dental wax, try a little ball of warm candle wax. In a pinch, you can use a little chunk of pre-chewed sugarless gum. Any port in a storm.

Injuries to the Soft Tissues of the Mouth

Tears, puncture wounds and lacerations to the cheek, lips or tongue should be cleaned right away and the injured person taken to the emergency room for the necessary suturing and wound repair. Bleeding from a tongue laceration can be reduced by pulling the tongue forward and using gauze to place pressure on the wound area until the bleeding stops.

Dr. Kenward is a dentist at 12651 South Dixie Highway in Pinecrest. His focus is on cosmetic and preventive dentistry. For more information call 305-255-7722.