

Dentistry Prepared for Special Situations

How Do I Handle a Dental Emergency?

If you and your family are into sports or other activities that put you at risk for dental injuries, be sure to follow the guidelines below in case of an emergency:

Knocked-out Tooth

If you lose a tooth playing sports or other kind of accident, retrieve the tooth and hold it by the crown. If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse it – without scrubbing or removing any tissue.

If possible, replace the tooth in the “socket,” the area where the tooth came out, and close the teeth together to hold it in place. If inserting the tooth is not possible, put it in a cup of cool milk or water.

Get to your dentist within 30 minutes if possible. If the incident occurs after-hours, call your dentist immediately.

Broken Tooth

Teeth break for a variety of reasons – there may be a fracture in the tooth or it might break while you’re chewing on a piece of ice or hard candy. If you break a tooth, rinse your mouth with warm water to keep the area clean. Use cold compresses on the area to keep the swelling down.

Get to your dentist’s office quickly. If the incident occurs after-hours, call your dentist immediately.

Bitten Tongue or Lip

Apply direct pressure to the wound with a clean cloth to stop any bleeding, and then place a cold compress to

swollen areas. If the bleeding doesn’t stop, go to a hospital emergency room.

Objects Caught Between Teeth

Carefully guide dental floss between the teeth. If the object remains embedded, go to the dentist. To avoid injury to your gums, jaw or tongue, do not use anything sharp and pointed to remove the object.

Toothache

Rinse mouth with warm water and floss to remove any food that might be trapped between the teeth. If these



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techniques do not relieve the pain, see your dentist as soon as possible.

Problems with Braces and Retainers

Go to the dentist if an appliance becomes loose or breaks off or a wire is stuck in your cheek, tongue or gum.

Trauma to the Jaw/Broken Jaw

Tie a scarf, handkerchief, necktie or towel around the jaw and over the top of the head to hold the jaw in place. Apply cold compresses to swollen areas and call your dentist or go immediately to a hospital emergency room.

Do I Need to Change My Dental Routine if I Become Pregnant?

Several studies show that regular dental visits may reduce the risk of delivering a pre-term, low birth-weight baby as a result of periodontal disease.

A recent study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* identified oral bacteria associated with periodontal diseases in the amniotic fluid of some pregnant women. The study, which evaluated 26 pregnant women with a diagnosis of threatened premature labor, found the presence of periodon-

tal bacteria, in both the oral cavity and amniotic fluid in 30 percent of the women.

Amniotic fluid is a liquid that surrounds an unborn baby during pregnancy. Any disruptions in the amniotic fluid, such as a bacterial infection, could potentially be dangerous to both the mother and baby.

To reduce your risk, properly brush and floss your teeth daily, and maintain regular appointments with your dentist. ■■■

This story includes information compiled from the American Dental Association and American Academy of Periodontology. For more information, visit www.floridadental.org, www.ada.org or www.perio.org.