

# Are You Prepared for a Dental Emergency?

Dental emergencies take place every day. Do you know what to do if a tooth is broken? Tooth knocked out? What about a toothache in the middle of the night and can't get to the dentist until the next day? Knowing what to do can help the pain and possibly save a tooth.

Keep dental office phone number and emergency number with other emergency numbers. Call the dentist as soon as possible for instructions on how to handle a dental emergency. The emergency room or urgent care center aren't the best place to go for dental problems.

- **Toothache:** Rinse the mouth with warm water to clean the area. Gently use dental floss, flosser or a soft-pick to remove food or object between teeth. Never put aspirin or pain pill against the gums near the aching tooth. This could burn the gums. Contact dentist if the toothache doesn't stop. Don't rely on pain pills. A dentist should evaluate the condition as soon as possible.
- **Knocked-out tooth:** Try to find the tooth. This may not be easy if the injury happened on a playground, basketball court or other activity. Try to stay calm. If dirt is in the mouth, rinse gently with water. If tooth is found, hold the tooth by the chewing surface. Don't touch the roots. If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse the tooth with water. Don't scrub it or remove any attached tissue pieces. If it's possible, gently insert and hold the tooth in its socket while you go to the dentist. If that's not possible, put the tooth in a cup of milk or water. Take the tooth and person to the dentist ASAP. To help save the tooth, go to the dentist within 1 hour.
- **Broken tooth:** Rinse mouth with warm water to clean the area. Use cold compresses on the outside of the cheek to reduce swelling. If there is bleeding, use gauze to apply pressure to the area. Go to your dental office as soon as possible. Take the piece of tooth with you if it's found.
- **Tongue, lip bites or mouth wounds:** Rinse the mouth with warm water. Gently clean the area with a clean cloth. Apply cold compress to reduce swelling. Go to emergency room or urgent care clinic if bleeding can't be stopped. If the wound is deep, has redness and drainage, go to emergency room or urgent care clinic. For tongue injury, you may be able to slow bleeding by pulling the tongue forward. Apply pressure with gauze on the wound.
- **Objects caught between teeth:** Try to gently remove the object with dental floss. Never use a sharp or pointed object to remove what is stuck between teeth. Contact dentist if the object can't be removed with floss.
- **Braces:** Call orthodontist if braces have a loose wire or bracket poking or cutting cheeks or gums. The orthodontist will tell you what to do. They can provide wax and ways to take care of the problem until you can get to the orthodontic office.
- **Possible broken jaw:** Apply cold compresses to control swelling. Get to an emergency room ASAP.



Office of Dental Health  
OralHealth.Mo.Gov  
[oralhealth@health.mo.gov](mailto:oralhealth@health.mo.gov)  
573-751-5874