Dental Injuries

If a baby tooth accidentally comes out, it can't — and doesn't need to — be put back in. However, losing a permanent tooth is a dental emergency. Many other dental injuries are less urgent, but may need to be looked at by a dentist. Most dental injuries in preschool and school-age children occur from falls, while dental injuries in teenagers are often sports related.

What to Do:

When a baby, toddler, or young child injures the gums or teeth:
1. Apply pressure to the area (if it's bleeding) with a piece of cold, wet gauze.
2. Offer an ice pop to suck on to reduce swelling.
3. Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen as needed for pain.

When a permanent tooth is chipped or broken:
1. Collect all pieces of the tooth.
2. Rinse the mouth with warm water.
3. Hold a cold compress (such as an ice cube wrapped in cloth or gauze) against the injured tooth.
4. Contact a dentist.

Seek Medical Care if a Permanent Tooth Is Knocked Out:

Go to the dentist or emergency room right away after following these steps:

- Find the tooth. Call a dentist or emergency room right away if you aren't sure if it's a permanent tooth (baby teeth have smooth edges).
- Hold the tooth by the crown (the surface farthest from the gumline) — not the root.
- Try to put the tooth back in the socket right away and have the child hold it in place.
- If the tooth cannot be put back in the socket, store it in cold milk. **Do not store it in tap water.**
- Have the child bite down on a gauze pad or handkerchief to relieve bleeding and pain.

Think Prevention!

Make sure children wear mouth guards and protective gear for contact sports and helmets while biking, skateboarding, and inline skating. Childproof your house to prevent falls.

Notes from the Nurse:

School Nurse