



Dental Emergencies

What to Do When a Dental Emergency Happens

What Is a Dental Emergency?

Dental emergencies can happen suddenly and may involve pain, bleeding, swelling, or injury to the teeth or surrounding tissues. Knowing what to do in the first few minutes can help reduce complications and improve the chances of saving a tooth.

Not every dental problem requires immediate emergency care, but some situations should be evaluated as soon as possible.

Common Dental Emergencies

Dental emergencies may include:

- A knocked-out tooth
 - A broken or chipped tooth
 - Severe toothache
 - Dental abscess
 - Lost filling or crown
 - Broken dental appliance
 - Injury to the lips, gums, or tongue
 - Jaw injury
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Knocked-Out Permanent Tooth

A permanent tooth that has been completely knocked out requires **immediate attention**.

If possible:

1. Pick up the tooth by the **crown**, not the root.
2. If dirty, gently rinse it with clean water for a few seconds.
3. Do not scrub the tooth or remove attached tissue.
4. If possible, gently place the tooth back into the socket.

5. If this is not possible, store it in **cold milk**, a tooth preservation solution if available, or inside the cheek (only if the person is awake and can safely avoid swallowing it).
6. Seek emergency dental care immediately.

The sooner treatment begins, the greater the chance the tooth can be saved.

Knocked-Out Baby Tooth

Do **not** attempt to place a baby tooth back into the socket.

Contact a dentist promptly for evaluation.

Reimplanting a baby tooth may damage the developing permanent tooth.

Broken or Chipped Tooth

If a tooth breaks:

- Rinse your mouth with warm water.
- Save any broken pieces if possible.
- Apply a cold compress to reduce swelling.
- Contact your dentist as soon as possible.

Even small fractures may require treatment to prevent further damage.

Severe Toothache

A severe toothache may be caused by:

- Tooth decay
- Infection
- A cracked tooth
- Gum disease

Until you can see a dentist:

- Rinse with warm water.

- Gently floss around the affected tooth to remove trapped food.
- Do not place aspirin directly on the gums or tooth, as this may irritate the tissues.

Persistent or severe pain should always be evaluated.

Dental Abscess

A dental abscess is a serious infection that requires prompt treatment.

Symptoms may include:

- Severe throbbing pain
- Swelling of the gums or face
- Pus drainage
- Bad taste in the mouth
- Fever
- Difficulty swallowing or opening the mouth

An untreated abscess can spread beyond the mouth and become a serious medical condition.

Seek immediate dental care.

If you experience difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, or rapidly spreading facial swelling, seek emergency medical care immediately.

Lost Filling or Crown

If a filling or crown comes off:

- Keep the restoration if you can.
- Avoid chewing on that side of the mouth.
- Contact your dentist for repair or replacement.

Leaving a tooth unprotected may increase sensitivity or the risk of fracture.

Soft Tissue Injuries

Cuts involving the lips, tongue, cheeks, or gums may bleed significantly.

To help control bleeding:

- Apply gentle pressure with clean gauze.
- Rinse gently with clean water.
- Apply a cold compress to reduce swelling.

If bleeding is heavy or does not stop after approximately 10–15 minutes of firm pressure, seek emergency medical care.

Broken Braces or Wires

If an orthodontic wire becomes loose or broken:

- Do not attempt to cut the wire yourself.
 - Cover sharp ends with orthodontic wax if available.
 - Contact your orthodontist for instructions.
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What Should You Keep in a Dental Emergency Kit?

A simple emergency kit may include:

- Sterile gauze
 - Small container with a lid
 - Dental floss
 - Cold pack
 - Orthodontic wax
 - Disposable gloves
 - Saline solution
 - Your dentist's contact information
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When Should You Go to the Emergency Room?

Most dental problems are best treated by a dentist.

However, seek emergency medical care immediately if you experience:

- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty swallowing
- Severe facial swelling
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Significant facial trauma
- Suspected jaw fracture

These situations may require immediate medical attention.

Can Dental Emergencies Be Prevented?

Many dental emergencies can be prevented by:

- Wearing a mouthguard during sports
 - Avoiding chewing ice or very hard objects
 - Maintaining regular dental checkups
 - Treating cavities early
 - Wearing a night guard if you grind your teeth
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Key Takeaways

- ✓ Dental emergencies require prompt evaluation.
 - ✓ A knocked-out permanent tooth has the best chance of survival when treated immediately.
 - ✓ Do not reinsert a knocked-out baby tooth.
 - ✓ Severe swelling, fever, or difficulty breathing requires urgent medical attention.
 - ✓ Save broken teeth or restorations whenever possible.
 - ✓ Regular dental care helps prevent many emergencies.
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References

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