

## Treating Dental Injuries

Anytime there is a dental injury, knowing what to do and how fast you need to react can mean the difference between saving or losing a tooth. And the person you need the most—a dentist—is probably not there. For this reason, Dear Doctor created this field-side guide so that anyone can assist the injured person.

For purposes of discussion and clarity, time lines have been suggested related to the type of injury and treatment needed; however, it is your dentist who should make that final decision.

### What to do and when

There are some simple rules to follow. Dental injuries can be categorized into treatment needs as follows:



**Immediate - A permanent tooth is knocked out:** A tooth that is no longer in its socket requires immediate attention. You need to react within 5 minutes to have any chance of saving the tooth long term.



**Urgent - A tooth has been moved from its original position:** A tooth that has been moved, either inwards, outwards, or to the side is considered an acute injury and should be dealt with urgently, within a 6 hour timeframe.



**Less Urgent - A tooth is chipped or broken but not moved:** Injuries in which teeth are broken or chipped but not bodily moved from their original position are less urgent and can be addressed within 12 hours.

**WARNING:** Anytime an injury involves blood, it is strongly advised that you protect both your health and the health of the patient by avoiding direct, unprotected contact with any blood or bodily fluids. You should wear protective gloves when assisting a bleeding, injured person. If none are available, you may use a clean plastic bag or other sterile form of protection.



### About Dear Doctor

*Dear Doctor - Dentistry & Oral Health* is a quarterly publication written exclusively by dental healthcare professionals for the education and well-being of the general public. With a straightforward, easy-to-understand approach, Dear Doctor's goal is to open the lines of communication between dental professionals and the public by addressing real-world patients' questions so they can understand and make informed healthcare decisions. Learn more at [www.DearDoctor.com](http://www.DearDoctor.com).

### Reprint Information

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### Credits

This quick-reference guide is a summary of the article, "The Field-Side Guide to Dental Injuries" by Dr. David J. Kenny and Dr. Michael J. Casas published in Volume 3, Issue 4 of *Dear Doctor - Dentistry & Oral Health* magazine's special issue "Sports Injuries and Dentistry."

Drs. Kenny and Casas are members of the Toronto Dental Trauma Research Group, The Hospital for Sick Children, and the University of Toronto (Canada).

For more information visit [www.DearDoctor.com/dental-injuries](http://www.DearDoctor.com/dental-injuries)

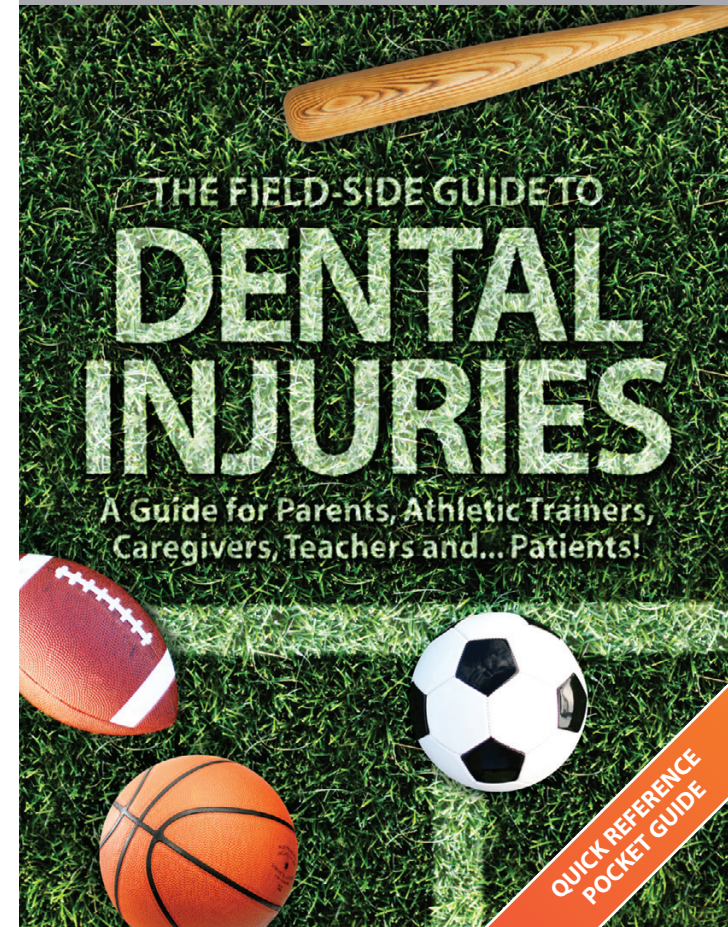
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# Dear DOCTOR

DENTISTRY & ORAL HEALTH



## Immediate Treatment—Within 5 Minutes

A Permanent Tooth Is Knocked Out (Avulsion)



**WARNING:** If there has been a loss of consciousness from a head injury, even temporary, there may be a serious injury—go to the hospital. If providing care, wear protective gloves.

**1) Verify the tooth is clean.** If not, grab the crown of the tooth and rinse the root with clean water. **DO NOT SCRUB OR SCRAPE THE ROOT SURFACE!**

**Note:** If no one at the accident scene will replant the tooth, or if the injured person is unwilling or unable to cooperate, or if the damage to the tooth socket and adjacent teeth is substantial; control bleeding with pressure. Place the tooth in the patient's own saliva between the cheek and teeth (or depending on age of the injured person, place it in a plastic bag with the injured person's saliva) or in cold milk to keep it from drying while transporting the patient and tooth to a dentist.

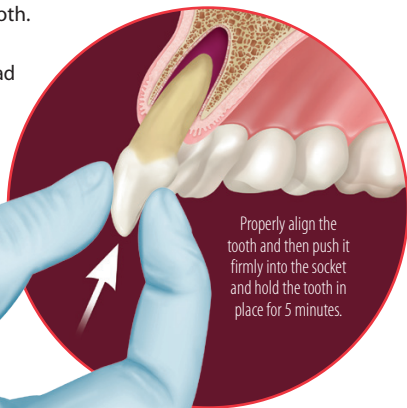
**2) Ensure the tooth's orientation is correct** with the flat tooth surface forward and insert the tooth back into the socket.

**3) Apply sustained pressure to the tooth for 5 minutes** to displace the blood accumulating in the socket and to set the tooth in its proper position. Then apply gentle pressure for 5 minutes with a wad of wet tissue or gauze on the edge of the tooth to keep it from coming out of the socket.

**4) Obtain dental treatment** for a thorough evaluation and long-term treatment for saving and permanently setting the tooth.

**5) Get a tetanus shot** within a day or two if you have not had one within the last 10 years and the wound was dirty.

**NOTE:** Primary (baby) teeth are not replanted.



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## Urgent Treatment—Within 6 Hours

A Tooth Is Moved from Its Original Position



**WARNING:** If there has been a loss of consciousness from a head injury, even temporary, there may be a serious injury—go to the hospital. If providing care, wear protective gloves.

### Permanent Teeth

For teeth driven into or partially out of the jaw, pushed out of alignment, or teeth which are fractured, see a DENTIST\* as soon as possible (at a minimum within hours) for evaluation and treatment.

\*People often seek treatment at a hospital/emergency clinic when a dentist can be more helpful in accessing/providing treatment options.

### Trauma to Soft Tissues in the Mouth

- 1) Gently wash the wound with soap and clean water** (especially outside the mouth if the lips and cheeks are involved). If not possible, carefully remove any debris by hand.
- 2) Rinse thoroughly.**
- 3) Apply direct pressure** with gauze continuously for 10 minutes to control bleeding. If you cannot control the bleeding, call a dentist or go to an emergency room immediately.
- 4) See a dentist or an oral surgeon** within 6 hours for a soft tissue evaluation and for any evidence of trauma and/or damage to teeth, jaws and jaw joints.
- 5) Get a tetanus shot** within a day or two if you have not had one within the last 10 years and the wound was dirty.

### Primary (Baby) Teeth

For pain, bleeding, or if a child is unable to bite and close the teeth together normally, call a dentist immediately.

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## Less Urgent Treatment—Within 12 Hours

A Tooth Is Chipped or Broken but Not Moved



**WARNING:** If there has been a loss of consciousness from a head injury, even temporary, there may be a serious injury—go to the hospital. If providing care, wear protective gloves.

### Permanent Teeth

• **Chipped or Fractured Teeth:** These teeth may be sensitive to touch, hot and/or cold, and should be treated within 12 hours to hopefully prevent any negative long-term issues. Be sure to locate any tooth fragments as they may be reattached to the crown of the tooth via tooth-colored bonding materials.



An example of how broken or chipped teeth can be restored using bonding tooth colored materials. (Dentistry by Dr. Doug Lambert)

• **A Loosened Tooth or One that's Tender to Touch:** See a dentist within 12 hours for an evaluation as the teeth may require splinting (support). Or, if no dental treatment is required, the dentist may need to examine and x-ray teeth for damage and to monitor them during future exams.

### Primary (Baby) Teeth

• **Chipped or Fractured Teeth:** These teeth may be sensitive to touch, hot and/or cold, and should be treated within 12 hours to hopefully prevent any negative long-term issues. Treatment of primary teeth will depend on the nature of the damage and the proximity to the permanent tooth bud.

• **A Loosened Tooth or One That's Tender to Touch:** See a dentist within 12 hours for an evaluation of the affected teeth. No treatment may be required but an evaluation as to whether or not an adjacent permanent tooth may have been damaged is important. The dentist may need to examine and x-ray teeth for damage and to monitor them during future exams.

