

From the office of:

Matthew H. Langewisch, DDS, FAGD
Little Sprouts Dental
W62N563 Washington Ave.
Cedarburg, WI 53012
(262) 297-0079

Dealing With Dental Emergencies

Dental emergencies can happen at any time. You and your children risk breaking teeth or injuring your mouth while eating, playing, exercising, and participating in other seemingly harmless activities, especially during the summer months. Oral injuries often are painful and should be treated by a dentist as soon as possible. Learn more about what to do in case of a dental emergency.

What are dental emergencies and how can I help my children avoid them?

Dental emergencies occur when the tooth breaks, cracks, becomes loosened, or is knocked out completely. Emergencies also include crowns coming off teeth or injuries to mouth tissue. You can help your children avoid dental emergencies by taking simple precautions, including making sure they wear mouthguards during sports activities and avoid foods that could crack or break the teeth.

What should I do if my child's tooth is knocked out?

Your child's tooth will have the best chance of surviving dental trauma if you see your dentist within one hour of any emergency—so call immediately for an appointment. Handle the tooth by the crown (the top), not by the root (the pointed part on the bottom); touching the root could damage cells that are necessary to reattach the tooth to the bone.



Gently rinse the tooth in water to remove dirt, but do not scrub it. Place the clean tooth in your child's mouth between the cheek and gum to keep it moist. It is important not to let the tooth dry out, so if your child can't keep it in his or her mouth, wrap it in a clean cloth or gauze and immerse it in milk or the child's own saliva until you get to your dentist's office.

If your child has a baby tooth knocked out, the tooth should not be replanted. However, your child should visit the dentist immediately to ensure no broken pieces of the tooth remain.

What should I do if my child's tooth is pushed out of position?

Call your dentist right away for an emergency appointment. In the meantime, attempt to reposition your child's tooth

to its normal alignment using light finger pressure—but don't force it.

What should I do if my child's tooth is chipped or fractured?

There are different types of tooth fractures. Chipped teeth are minor fractures. Moderate fractures involve damage to the enamel, tissue, and/or pulp. A severely fractured tooth usually has been traumatized to the point that it cannot be recovered.

If your child fractures a tooth, rinse his or her mouth with warm water and use an ice pack or cold compress to reduce swelling. Contact your dentist immediately. He or she can smooth minor tooth fractures with a sandpaper disc, but some fractures may require restorative procedures. If you can find the broken tooth fragment, bring it with you to the dentist.

What should I do if tissue in my child's mouth is injured?

If your child experiences a tear, cut, puncture wound, or laceration on his or her cheek, lips, or tongue, immediately clean the wound with warm water. Bleeding from a tongue laceration can be reduced by pulling the tongue forward and using gauze to place pressure on the wound. Visit an oral surgeon for emergency care as soon as possible, or go to the emergency room if you cannot see an oral surgeon right away.



KnowYourTeeth.com

Brought to you by the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), this website answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and helps visitors find highly qualified general dentists near where they live.

The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 35 leading dental health organizations. Look for more information about the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign at www.2min2x.org.

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