Dental injuries – tooth loss

Summary

- If knocked out, a permanent (adult) tooth should be replaced in the socket as soon as possible.
- Every minute counts when you’re trying to save a permanent tooth.
- Always seek immediate advice from your dentist or oral health professional.
- Baby teeth (milk or deciduous teeth) should not be put back in their socket.
- Wear a mouthguard to prevent dental injuries during sport.

If an adult (permanent) tooth is knocked out, there is a reasonable chance it will survive if it is put back into the gum straight away, and you seek help immediately from a dentist. Every minute the tooth is out of the gum, the less chance it has of surviving. Do not put baby teeth back in the mouth if they are knocked out. This can damage the developing permanent tooth underneath the gum.

Knocked-out adult (permanent) teeth

If an adult or permanent tooth is knocked out:

- Handle the tooth by the crown (smooth white part), not the root (yellowish pointy parts).
- If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse it in milk or saline for a few seconds – not in water. (If no milk or saline is available, rinse the tooth in water for up to ten seconds.)
- Gently put the tooth back into the gum. Make sure the pointy root is the part that goes into the gum. Only do this if the person is conscious.
- Get the person to hold the tooth in place by gently biting on something soft, like a handkerchief.
- Make sure the person sees a dentist immediately.

If you can’t put a permanent tooth back:

- put it in milk, or saline or, if these are not available, wrap it in plastic food wrap
- make sure the person visits a dentist immediately (and takes the tooth with them).

What NOT to do with a knocked-out adult tooth

- Don’t clean the tooth by scrubbing or using cleaning products or water.
- Don’t handle the tooth by the root.
- Don’t let the tooth dry out.

Knocked-out baby teeth

Do not put a knocked-out baby tooth back in the gum, because it might:

- fuse to the bone. This causes problems when it is time for the baby tooth to fall out naturally, and can affect the growth of the adult tooth, bone and gums
- damage the permanent tooth sitting underneath in the gum.

If your child has a baby tooth knocked out, see your dentist to make sure there is no other damage to the teeth or mouth.

Chipped or cracked tooth

Cracked or fractured teeth may or may not be painful. It is recommended that you see an oral health professional as soon as possible, as early repair can improve the health and survival of the damaged tooth. Your gum might also be damaged, and it may need attention.
If the tooth fragment is broken and is intact:

- store it in milk or saliva (preferably the saliva of the person with the broken tooth) or, if these are not available, seal it in plastic wrap
- see an oral health professional as soon as possible.

**Where to get help**

- Your [dentist](#)
- Emergency dental care is available to all Victorians through The [Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne](#) and is available to eligible Victorians at [community dental clinics](#). For more information about public emergency dental services Tel. [9341 1000](#) or [1800 833 039](#) outside Melbourne metro
- [Australian Dental Association](#) ‘Find a Dentist’ search function or Tel. [8825 4600](#)

---

**Copyright © 1999/2020 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.**