

Immediate steps to take in the event of a dental emergency

Toothaches:

First, thoroughly rinse your mouth with warm water. Use dental floss to remove any lodged food. If your mouth is swollen, apply a cold compress to the outside of your mouth or cheek. Never put aspirin or any other painkiller against the gums near the aching tooth because it may burn the gum tissue. Take the painkillers you usually take. Contact us as soon as possible.

Chipped or broken teeth:

Rinse the mouth using warm water. If there's bleeding, apply a piece of gauze to the area for about 10 minutes or until the bleeding stops. Apply a cold compress to the outside of the mouth, cheek or lip near the broken/chipped tooth to keep any swelling down and relieve pain. Contact us as soon as possible.

Lost filling:

As a temporary measure, stick a piece of sugarless gum into the cavity (sugar-filled gum will cause pain) or use an over-the-counter dental cement. Contact us as soon as possible.

Lost crown:

If the crown falls off, make an appointment with us as soon as possible and bring the crown with you. If you can't get to us right away and the tooth is causing pain, use a cotton swab to apply a little clove oil to the sensitive area (clove oil can be purchased at your local drug store or in the spice aisle of your grocery store). If possible, slip the crown back over the tooth. Before doing so, coat the inner surface with an over-the-counter dental cement, tooth paste, or denture adhesive, to help hold the crown in place. Do not use super glue!

Abscess:

Abscesses are infections that occur around the root of a tooth or in the space between the teeth and gums. Abscesses are a serious condition that can damage tissue and surrounding teeth, with the infection possibly spreading to other parts of the body if left untreated.

Because of the serious oral health and general health problems that can result from an abscess, contact us as soon as possible if you discover a pimple-like swelling on your gum that usually is painful. In the meantime, to ease the pain and draw the pus toward the surface, try rinsing your mouth with a mild salt -water solution (1/2 teaspoon of table salt in 8 ounces of water) several times a day.

Soft-tissue injuries:

Injuries to the soft tissues, which include the tongue, cheeks, gums and lips, can result in bleeding. To control the bleeding, here's what to do:

1. Rinse your mouth with a mild salt-water solution.
2. Use a moistened piece of gauze or tea bag to apply pressure to the bleeding site. Hold in place for 15 to 20 minutes.
3. To both control bleeding and relieve pain, hold a cold compress to the outside of the mouth or cheek in the affected area for 5 to 10 minutes.
4. If the bleeding doesn't stop, contact us right away or go to a hospital emergency room. Continue to apply pressure on the bleeding site with the gauze until you can be seen and treated.