

# TOOTH AVULSION - A PARENT'S NIGHTMARE



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Injuries to the face and mouth due to sports or other accidents can cause teeth to fracture, loosen or even get knocked out of its socket (avulsion). These kinds of injuries are more common with children while they are running or playing, especially those between the ages of 8 and 11. However the good news is that teeth that are knocked out can often be saved if replanted straight back into the socket.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN A TOOTH HAS BEEN KNOCKED OUT

In such a case, it is very important to get to the dentist as quickly as possible after a tooth has been knocked out. The chances of saving a tooth are highest in young children, but adult teeth can be saved as well. Only permanent teeth should be re-

implanted. Before you get to the dentist, follow the steps below:

- Remain calm, act quickly and don't delay. Remember, time is critical.
- Find the tooth. Attempt replant ONLY if it is a permanent tooth. (You should not replant a baby tooth!)
- Hold the tooth by its crown, NOT by the root.
- If the tooth is clean, replant immediately. Put it back into its socket.
- If the tooth is dirty, replant quickly after rinsing. Rinse in plain cold milk. If no milk is available, rinse briefly in cold water. Do not scrape or rub the root surface. Put tooth back into socket.
- Apply finger pressure to keep tooth in place.
- If you cannot put the tooth back into the socket, keep the tooth moist. Drop it into a glass of milk. If you can't find milk, place the tooth in the child's mouth, between the cheek and gum. A young child may not be able to safely 'store' the tooth in his or her mouth without swallowing it. Instead, have the child spit saliva into a cup. Place the tooth in the cup with the saliva.

When a tooth has been knocked out, the nerves, blood vessels and supporting tissues get damaged as well. It is not possible to repair the nerves and blood vessels. That is why all avulsed teeth will need a root canal treatment. However, the bone can reattach to the root of the tooth once it's put back into place.

## REPLANTING THE TOOTH

Putting the tooth back in place sometimes can be simple or complicated, such as when the tooth or bone is broken. The dentist will use saline water to flush debris from the socket. Then he or she will slip the tooth back into place. It is very important to reimplant the tooth as soon as possible. Ideally, this should be done within one hour of the accident.

The dentist may decide to perform a root canal right away, or may wait. The best course to take will depend on how long the tooth was out of the mouth and other factors. In any case, the dentist will splint (attach) the avulsed tooth to the teeth on either side with a soft wire and/or composite material. This is important to hold the tooth in place for several days till the tooth gets reattached to the bone. Your dentist will decide how long the splint should remain.

If the bone around the tooth was not fractured, the root usually reattaches