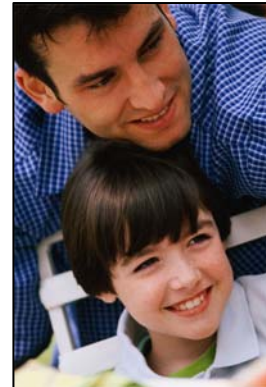


Trauma to the Mouth

What to do when a tooth is completely knocked out

Important information that you can use from McDonald Orthodontics

Picture this: a warm summer day at your daughter's baseball game, a funny bounce on a ground ball and your child is being escorted back to you, sobbing, with a cut lip, blood in her mouth and her beautiful, white front tooth intact in her hand, bloody...root and all. Her tooth knocked completely out as if it had been pulled by the dentist. What would you do?



We often see a similar scenario in our office but because the child was wearing braces. The teeth are loose but the braces kept them from being knocked completely out.

We recently had a traumatic event that happened to a patient that did not have their braces on yet, Dr. McDonald wanted our patients to know what to do if this happened to them. What happened to this family could happen to anyone. Knowing what to do is a powerful tool if you or someone you are with is injured. Besides the comfort of making the right decision for your child or someone you love, it can literally save you thousands of dollars, not to mention the many dental appointments required to replace a tooth.

Here is the story of our patient and the information on what to do if you are faced with a similar situation:

Our patient had an accident in which one of his front teeth was knocked completely out (not broken or fractured). The whole tooth, intact root, and all was there in his hand and a bloody hole where the tooth should have been. (Front teeth are almost 1 ½ inches long, nothing like the baby teeth you may have seen! It is a bit of a shock for most people when they first see this.) His parents took him to the emergency room, tooth and all, and waited to be seen. They took their son to the hospital fully believing they were doing the very best for him. Unfortunately, they were made to wait several hours before being seen. By that time, it was too late; the tooth had dried out and it could not be placed back in the mouth to be reattached. If

the tooth had been handled properly, there is an excellent chance it could have lasted for the rest of his life as a normal front tooth.

If a tooth is knocked out, take the following steps as suggested by the American Academy of Endodontics:

(Note: An Endodontist is someone who specializes in root canals so they see a lot of broken and knocked out teeth)

1. Locate the tooth immediately. Do not leave it at the site of the accident. The tooth should be handled carefully; touch only the crown (the section normally visible in the mouth) to minimize injury to the root.
2. If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse with water only. Remember not to handle the root surface.
 - a. Do not use soap or chemicals.
 - b. Do not scrub the tooth.
 - c. Do not dry the tooth.
 - d. Do not wrap the tooth in a tissue or cloth.
3. Reposition the tooth in the socket immediately, if possible. Keep in mind, there will be a lot of blood; this is a good thing. The sooner the tooth is replaced, the greater likelihood it will survive. To reinsert, carefully push the tooth into the socket with your fingers or position it above the socket and close the mouth slowly. Hold the tooth in place with your fingers or by gently biting down on it.
4. Keep the tooth moist at all times. The tooth must not be left outside the mouth to dry. If it cannot be replaced in the socket, put it in one of the following:
 - a. An emergency tooth preservation kit
 - b. A glass of milk
 - c. The mouth, next to the cheek
 - d. If none of these is practical, cover the tooth with water (with a pinch of salt, if possible).
5. See your dentist or an endodontist as soon as possible, ideally within 30 minutes.



It is possible to save the tooth if it has been outside the mouth longer than 30 minutes, but again, the likelihood of survival decreases as time goes by.

Saving your natural tooth should always be your first choice, not only following an injury, but also during the normal course of your life. When dental care is needed, nothing, not even the most advanced bridges or implants can truly replace your natural tooth.

For further reference, or to guide you during an injury, this information can be found on our web site at www.salembraces.com.

Knowing what to do in case of an accident can help you all enjoy a healthy, active life.

A personal note and summary from Dr. John McDonald

Dear Parents and Patients,

What happened to my patient really affected me, mostly as a parent and secondarily as a dentist. To see this tooth lost due to the lack of a small bit of information combined with the bad luck to hit the Emergency Room during a busy time really got to me.

I think about teeth and smiles a lot, and how to do the best job for each unique set of circumstances each patient presents. I just want what is best for your teeth (and your kid's teeth). Clearly, sitting in the ER with the tooth in you hand is not what is best for that particular tooth.

So, being a parent, an orthodontist and one who thinks way too much about making teeth straight prompted me to share this information with all of you. Hopefully my smile obsession and the Internet can save a few teeth.

I want to end with an orthodontist's summary of what to do if you are ever faced with the above situation:

PUT THE TOOTH BACK INTO THE HOLE!!!!!!

Even if it's backwards, it can be repositioned later.

It will be bloody, scary, and probably hurt a bit, but as long as there is not visible dirt, you are *never* wrong to put it back in.

The sooner the better and the more blood the better. The mouth has a great capacity to heal itself and can take a lot of abuse and recover amazingly well. Just get the tooth back in and 90% of the battle is won. It will feel good as a parent, and probably save you a fair amount of money to boot. Remember, nothing, not even the most advanced technology, is as good as a natural tooth.

Please forward this information to friends and relatives and remember you can always find it at www.SalemBraces.com

If in the future you ever have occasion to put a tooth back in, let me know and I will share the story on my web page, your experience may help the next person. You can reach me at info@salembraces.com.

Thanks for the privilege of caring for you and your family.

Sincerely,

Dr. John McDonald