

Oral Trauma for Babies and Toddlers

Accidents can happen and unfortunately around one third of infants and toddlers suffer oral trauma. The most accident prone time for kids is when they start walking. Accidents usually happen when a child takes a tumble at home, daycare or in the local playground. Baby or primary teeth can be chipped, displaced or knocked out completely. Lips, tongues and gums can be cut too.

Luckily, in the majority of cases there are no long term problems.

How to minimise oral trauma to primary teeth

Encourage your child to play safely, by watching where they are going and most importantly, avoid running and walking with objects in their mouths. Don't let your child run around at pools. Supervise your toddler at the playground, to ensure safety at all times.

First aid for oral trauma to primary teeth:

- Check for serious injuries sustained such as a bump to the head, severe cuts, etc.
- Control any bleeding by applying pressure to the affected area with a clean cloth
- Comfort your child
- Apply ice wrapped in a clean cloth externally to relieve pain and swelling
- Provide pain relief if required
- Seek your dentist's advice immediately.
- For some time after the accident, check the affected area for swelling and tenderness and the child for any signs of a fever. An infection may develop some time after the accident. If this happens return to your dentist immediately.

IMPORTANT: If a tooth is knocked out

Do not attempt to put the tooth back into its socket yourself as this may cause damage to future permanent teeth or lead to infection. Instead try to find the tooth and keep it moist in milk and take it with you to a dentist or the hospital emergency department as quickly as possible.

If a primary tooth is permanently lost

It's important to take a positive approach. Prepare your child for questions about the missing tooth in future social interactions. Answers such as 'the tooth fairy took away my hurt tooth' works well because an early visit by the tooth fairy is exciting and welcome.

Children adapt to eating and talking very quickly following the loss of teeth and in most cases are unaffected by their absence.

For more information on caring for your teeth visit the ADA's website: www.ada.org.au.

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