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Would you know what to do in case of a serious dental injury?



ASK THE DENTIST
DR. DAVID BANDA

Questions: My husband and 10-year-old son have been involved in a lot of sports this summer. I'm worried that I will not know what to do if a dental injury occurs. What types of dental injuries can I be prepared for and how I can try to prevent them?

Answer: A dental injury can happen during any season—winter, spring, summer or fall. Just like Murphy's law, a dental emergency seems to happen at night, on a weekend or during a holiday. It's important for everyone to be aware of some simple dental first-aid procedures. Many people who have experienced an injury could have saved their teeth if they would have known what to do. I urge you to photocopy this article and share it with your family, friends and co-workers.

The most common—and most serious—dental emergency is a chipped or broken tooth or the complete loss of a tooth due to trauma, such as an automobile accident or a blow to the mouth. If a dental injury occurs, it's important to get to a dentist as soon as possible. If a tooth is completely knocked out, the tooth must remain moist. The American Dental Association recommends a kit specifically designed for tooth preservation—Save-A-Tooth—for this purpose. Check with your dentist regarding how you can order this product.

The next best way to keep a tooth moist is to immediately place it into a glass of milk. If milk

is not available, place the tooth under the victim's tongue or between the cheek and gumline. Water is to be used only as a last resort. These measures preserve the vitality of the tooth to whatever extent is possible and in many cases the tooth can be re-implanted (put back into the socket and splinted in place). This can be done if the patient can get to a dentist within 30 minutes to one hour after the injury occurs. It is very important to try and achieve this objective.

If your dentist is too far away, proceed to the nearest hospital emergency room instead. Just recently it was reported that a paramedic was praised for saving a young woman's teeth after she was involved in an automobile accident. He even went to a nearby home to borrow the milk! The woman's dentist was able to re-implant the teeth and she will have to wait about two weeks to see if the teeth will take root again.

There has been an increase in dental injuries among young children who play basketball. These injuries are occurring when basketball nets are lowered in order to make it easier to slam dunk. The child dunks the ball and the momentum carries the child's head through the net, exposing the teeth to the strong nylon netting that is attached to the rim. In many cases the child's tooth or several of the teeth have been caught on the net and dislodged. So, never lower the basketball net to allow children to slam dunk from picnic tables or any other object.

If a child knocks out a baby tooth prematurely, it's very important that the child be taken to the dentist to make sure no damage has occurred to an underlying permanent tooth since the baby tooth

guides the permanent tooth into place. A space maintainer may be placed to hold the space so there is enough room for permanent teeth eruption. Baby teeth are generally not re-implanted in the mouth.

If a tooth is chipped or fractured, it's best to get to the dentist to have a dental X-ray taken to check the severity of the injury and have it treated accordingly. Never judge the severity of the injury yourself because the injury may not be apparent to the naked eye. The nerve may be damaged and could abscess, causing further damage to the tooth and the bone. Or the bone itself may be broken. Make sure that a dentist checks for any internal injury to the mouth and jaw.

Another traumatic injury is a laceration of the lip. This often looks worse than it is, but a medical consultation is highly recommended for first aid.

Many dental injuries can be prevented by wearing a sports mouth guard. Your dentist can provide you with a variety of different options. Mouth guards can be made with a clear material or can be painted to your team's colors. They are inexpensive for the most part and are well worth the investment, especially for active children and adults.

If it is suspected that the victim has a broken jaw, do not move that area. Proceed immediately to the emergency room of your local hospital or trauma center. If there is swelling, a cold compress may be applied as the patient is taken immediately to the emergency room.

Here are some treatments for other types of dental emergencies: The bleeding resulting from a bitten tongue or cheek can usually be stopped by the application of ice cubes wrapped in gauze or a

thin cloth to the affected area.

Any kind of toothache is a sign of a dental problem with the degree of pain usually indicating the seriousness of the problem. The key to solving this problem is to visit your dentist regularly for preventive treatment. No one wants to find themselves in pain in the middle of the night. Never diagnose the problem yourself and never treat yourself with a home remedy, as there is a great chance that you could make matters worse. Many of the over-the-counter remedies may provide temporary relief of pain but may also mask a more serious problem. This is why you should see your dentist as soon as possible.

A loose crown or bridge can often be replaced in the mouth by positioning it correctly and pressing it into place until you see your dentist. This will help protect the tooth from pain and will maintain gum position and prevent shifting of teeth. If the crown can be replaced properly and comes off again while you are awaiting your emergency dental visit, then a small amount of toothpaste gel may be placed inside the crown to hold it in place.

Remember, if the crown cannot be replaced easily at home, do not attempt to force it into place.

Forcing a crown into place may damage the tooth, the gums or the crown. It's very important to note that this is a temporary solution to a problem until you can see your dentist.

Until a crown or bridge is cemented professionally by a dentist with special cement, the tooth and crown could be prone to decay, gum problems, or pain.

If a filling falls out, you might want to obtain an over-the-counter

Please see BANDA, D6

Motivation, compliance keys to beating obesity

TO YOUR HEALTH



DR. KEITH LEVICK

As obesity continues to increase in this country, so does the frustration of overweight people trying to lose and/or maintain their weight loss. In an attempt to understand obesity, many theories and treatment programs have emerged over the years including commercial programs that provide a smorgasbord of behavioral techniques, fad diets, drugs, and specific medical programs. Despite all of

this, however, the understanding and management of this disorder remains perplexing.

Because motivation and program compliance are critical to success, this is the first of a two-part series devoted to shedding some light on obesity. To better understand the problem of motivation and compliance, examination of the issues associated with the change process is required. Weight loss, after all, involves a commitment to change in lifestyles and eating habits.

In general, people resist change for several reasons.

First, people are creatures of habit and routine. We feel secure when we're able to pre-

Please see LEVICK, D6

Here's a useful summer tip: Drink plenty of water

TALK TO THE MIRROR



FLORINE MARK

August tends to be a hot, humid time of year and exercising outdoors can make you feel a bit drained. But you can beat the heat by staying hydrated with what I call the "miracle drink"—water!

Water is delicious, easily accessible and excellent for your body in so many ways. It's important to drink a minimum of 6-8 glasses a day to keep your body healthy and functioning efficiently.

Did you know that during an average day, adults lose about 10 cups of water during normal activity through perspiration, urine, and even as water vapor from the lungs while breathing? Just think, if you were to exercise even moderately you'd lose approximately four cups of extra fluid per hour of activity!

What can we do to make up for all this fluid loss? Drink, drink, drink! We need to replace the water lost to fuel our organs. But be sure to replace water with water.

It's tempting to think you can drink a two-liter bottle of your favorite soft drink and count it as part of your water intake.

Please see MARK, D6

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