



Permanent Tooth Avulsion:

Emergency Management of a Lost Permanent Tooth due to Oral Trauma for Non-Dental Healthcare Providers

Permanent tooth avulsion is one of the most serious dental injuries. Physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other non-dental healthcare providers commonly encounter a child or adolescent who has experienced the loss of a permanent tooth ('tooth avulsion') due to oral trauma.

Prognosis is highly dependent on the steps taken immediately following tooth avulsion. Following these steps may help increase the probability that the replanted tooth will be saved. The first five steps can be given to parents, teachers or coaches over the phone when they are physically at the accident site with the patient.

Next Steps

1. Keep the patient calm.
2. Pick up the tooth by the crown (white part); avoid touching the root.
3. If the tooth is dirty, wash it briefly (10 seconds) in cold water, and then replant the tooth into its socket.
4. Ask the patient to hold the tooth into position by biting on a piece of gauze, a wash cloth or another small piece of clean fabric. If replantation is not possible, the tooth can be stored in the mouth while being transported for emergency dental care. Ask the patient to keep it between the molars and the inside of the cheek.
5. If replantation is not possible and the patient is unable to store the tooth in his/her mouth, place the tooth in a suitable physiologic storage medium such as milk, saline or Hank's Balanced Salt Solution (HBSS). Do not store in water.
6. Examine the face, lips and oral muscles for soft tissue lesions. Palpate the facial skeleton for signs of fractures. Check for loose (but not lost) teeth.
7. Clean the face and the oral cavity with water or saline. If there are soft tissue wounds, a mild detergent should be used. This cleaning will make the patient feel more comfortable and facilitate extraoral and oral examination.
8. If the avulsed tooth is soiled and it is not certain when the patient had his/her last tetanus shot, he/she may need a tetanus booster.
9. Prescribe systemic antibiotics.
10. Refer patient to a dentist for emergency dental treatment immediately.

