

Tackling Childhood Sports Injuries: Ⓣ Quick Action Can Keep Knocked-Out Teeth In The Game

(NAPSA)—It doesn't matter if it's soccer, football, softball or baseball—participation in any sport could put your child's smile at risk. According to the American Association of Endodontists (AAE), sports injuries are one of the leading causes of knocked-out teeth each year. With proper emergency action, though, a knocked-out, or "avulsed," tooth can be successfully replanted and last for many years.

The key, say AAE experts, is to act quickly, yet calmly, and follow these five simple steps:

1. Pick up the tooth by the crown (chewing surface), not the root. Handle the tooth carefully by the crown, avoiding the tooth opening, to help minimize injury to the root.

2. If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse it with a spray of water. While taking care not to handle the root surface, gently rinse the tooth with a spray of water. Don't use soap or chemicals, and don't scrub or dry the tooth, or wrap it in a tissue or cloth.

3. Reposition the tooth in the socket immediately, if possible. The sooner the tooth is replaced, the greater its chance of survival.

To reinsert, carefully push the tooth into the socket or position the tooth above the socket and close the mouth slowly. Hold the tooth in place with 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 can't be replaced in the socket, put it in a glass of milk or in the mouth next to the cheek. If none of these is practical, use water, preferably with a pinch of salt.

5. See an endodontist within 30 minutes. A tooth can sometimes be saved even if it's been outside the mouth for an hour or more, but getting professional help within 30 minutes significantly improves the odds of successful reimplantation.

Although your child's dentist may be well-qualified to handle an avulsed tooth, it may make more sense to visit an endodontist. Endodontists are dentists who specialize in performing root canal treatments and saving natural teeth. Accustomed to handling dental crises, they're often very flexible in accommodating emergency treatment requests. In

many cases, endodontists can save teeth that once would have been considered hopeless.

If necessary, the endodontist will perform root canal treatment on the knocked-out tooth to remove any soft inner-tissue damaged by the blow, filling and sealing the tooth, and replanting it in the socket. Within two weeks after root canal treatment is completed, contact your family dentist to arrange for a permanent filling or crown. Once restoration is completed, the treated tooth often can last a lifetime.

To prevent a knocked-out tooth in the first place, the AAE recommends that children use mouth guards while participating in sports activities to minimize the dental effects of impact injuries. Consider encouraging sporting event organizers and coaches to require the use of mouth guards for all participants. Finally, don't let a knocked-out tooth catch you unprepared—visit the AAE Web site at www.rootcanalspecialists.org to find an endodontist in your area and keep the number handy to ensure you'll be ready should a dental emergency arise.