



SADA

THE SOUTH AFRICAN
DENTAL ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE

Purpose:

Dental Trauma: What parents need to know

Statement:

DENTAL TRAUMA: WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

While most parents are all too familiar with the everyday slips, falls and scraped knees that come along with their children's playtime, it is often difficult to determine whether an injury warrants actual medical attention, particularly when the damage isn't very visually apparent as some dental trauma injuries can be.

This is according to Dr Nirvada Niranjani, Manager of Coding and Nomenclature of The South African Dental Association (SADA) – a leading professional membership body for dentistry and the voice of oral healthcare in South Africa - who notes that traumatic dental injuries often occur as a result of a sports or playground accident.

"While some of these injuries do not pose an immediate threat to a child's long-term health, more severe injuries can result in medical complications - like developing an abscess. Dental trauma injuries can also have an impact on a child's confidence if they have had a tooth knocked out or shattered, with fragments remaining in the gum, for example."

"Every dental trauma injury is unique and the treatment options will vary on a case-by-case basis. This is also largely dependent on whether the damaged tooth is a baby tooth or a permanent tooth – which are generally not present before a child is about six or seven. Regardless, it is important for children who experience such trauma to be examined by a dental professional as soon as possible to determine the extent of the damage and impact on nerves and blood vessels," she says.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 16% to 40% of children between the ages of six and 12 experience dental trauma due to a mishap at an unsafe playground or school, or as a consequence of a road accident or violent incident, like a fight.

Global information, software and services provider with involvement in healthcare, Wolters Kluwer, has also highlighted that nearly 50% of children will have some type of injury to a tooth during childhood.

Dr Niranjani shares her advice on what to do if your child falls victim to one of these common dental injuries:

1. A chipped or broken tooth

A relatively minor dental injury, a chipped, broken or cracked tooth should be seen to by a professional dentist within about 12 hours. Treatment, depending on how badly the tooth and surrounding area are damaged, can include anything from bonding to extraction. If you are able to find them, it is advisable to bring the pieces of the tooth with you when you go to the dentist.

2. Loose or shifted teeth

If teeth are slightly loose or 'wobbly' - in a way that interferes with a child's bite - following a traumatic dental injury, it is best for it to be examined by a professional dentist within at least 24 hours. Loose teeth are easily treated and are saved in most cases. If a tooth has been shifted or pushed deeper into its socket, however, more urgency should be applied to seeing a dentist within a few hours.

3. A dislodged tooth

If a permanent tooth is knocked out, it is a dental emergency that requires timely treatment because the sooner the tooth is placed back into its socket, the better the chance of it being successfully re-implanted.

First and foremost, find the tooth and gently clean it with water while avoiding touching the tooth by its roots. If possible, depending on the child's age and reaction, place the tooth back in its socket, held in place with some damp tissue or gauze. Alternatively, you can put the tooth between the cheek and gum, in a plastic bag with the child's saliva, or in a cup of cold milk. In this case it is vital to get to a dental office or emergency room as soon as possible.

If the dislodged tooth is a baby tooth, it would not normally be re-implanted. It is, however, still best to seek the advice of a dental professional.

4. Jaw or facial pain

If a child complains of pain along their jaw following a traumatic injury, there may be a chance of damage to the bone, jaw joint, gums or teeth.

In this event, place an icepack on the area and give your dentist a visit as he / she may want to x-ray the jaw and find out what may be causing the pain.

"My best advice for parents dealing with a child who has experienced a traumatic dental injury is to remain as calm as they can and make sure they quickly determine how serious the situation is. For children playing contact sports at school, a mouth guard is an effective protective option to consider. But ultimately, accidents happen and it is up to us to be as prepared as we can to deal with them," Dr Niranjan concludes.

#Ends

Release date: 30 August 2017

About SADA:

The leading professional industry membership body for dentistry in Southern Africa, the South African Dental Association (SADA) represents over 80% of registered dentists in the country's private and public sectors. Membership is open to industry professionals from dental students to retired dentists.

The association is committed and engaged in processes relating to setting industry standards and formulating policies. Learn more about us at <http://www.sada.co.za>

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