Common Dental Emergencies

So you've got a toothache, a chipped tooth, or some other kind of dental issue? There are a few steps you can take to help ease pain and make you as comfortable as possible while you seek treatment from a provider.

If you have pain or swelling, take an over-the-counter painkiller, such as ibuprofen (avoid aspirin). If you're bleeding, apply pressure with your hands or a cloth. Below are more specific steps to take, depending on the sort of trauma you are experiencing:

A possible broken jaw

If you have a broken jaw, you'll usually feel pain and have facial swelling. Other possible symptoms include jaw stiffness, bleeding from the mouth, and an abnormal appearance of the cheek or jaw. You might also have loose or damaged teeth, and it will probably be difficult to open your mouth widely. To control the swelling, apply a cold compress. Stabilize the jaw using a small towel wrapped beneath the jaw and tied on top of the head. Go at once to your provider or hospital emergency room.

A bitten tongue or lip

Clean the area gently with a cloth. Apply pressure and a cold compress to stop the bleeding and reduce swelling. Go to a hospital emergency room if the bleeding doesn't stop.

Chipped or broken teeth

Rinse your mouth with warm water to clean the area, use cold compresses, and call your provider immediately. If possible, bring the broken piece of your tooth to your provider's office. If it's large enough, your provider might be able to bond it to the original tooth.

A knocked-out tooth

The American Dental Association advises holding the tooth by the crown and rinsing off the root of the tooth in water if it's dirty. Don't scrub it or remove any attached tissue fragments. If it's not too painful, gently insert and hold the tooth in its socket. Otherwise, to keep the tooth and its root tissues moist, put it in a container of milk or saliva while getting to a provider as quickly as possible. You can also carry it between your lower lip and lower gum if you don't have a container.

Objects caught between teeth

Gently try to move the object with dental floss, but avoid cutting your gums. Never use a sharp object to dislodge something stuck between your teeth. If dental floss doesn't work, contact your provider.

A toothache

Rinse your mouth with warm water and gently use dental floss or an interdental cleaner to make sure there is no food or other debris caught between your teeth. Toothaches are usually the result of either tooth decay or an infection. Appropriate treatment could include antibiotics and dental restoration, so call your provider if the pain persists.

For more oral health and wellness resources, visit:
deltadentalco.com/wellness.aspx

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