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CELEBRATING THE ARTS | APRIL 2019





Teeth and Accidents

ADVICE TO MAKE THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION | BY JOHN BYRD



Dr. Sharif, who has been practicing for 23 years, is a diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and an associate professor at Howard University.

“Accidents can happen anywhere, anytime,” says Dr. Shohreh Sharif, who founded Greater Washington Dentistry almost 25 years ago and is one of the area’s leading practitioners of pediatric dentistry, as well as orthodontics in combination with general dentistry. “Knowing how to handle a dental emergency can mean the difference between saving and losing your child’s permanent tooth.”

Dr. Sharif says that it is important to take your child to the dentist, or an emergency room, in all dental emergencies as soon as possible. But it’s equally essential for parents to stay informed about the appropriate follow-up actions to the seven most frequently occurring dental mishaps.

Here are Sharif’s recommendations:

What do I do if my child knocks out his tooth?

Make sure your child does not have a more serious injury. Call 911 if necessary. In the case of a com-

pletely dislodged permanent or “adult” tooth, keep the tooth moist at all times by placing it in a container, or in milk – or use a tooth preservation product that bears the American Dental Association (ADA) Seal of Acceptance. Then, take your child to your dentist’s office at once. NOTE: A primary (baby tooth) does not need to be moistened, but should be found and – if possible – taken to the dentist with your child.

What if my child cracks his tooth?

Immediately rinse the mouth with warm water to clean the area. To keep swelling down put a cold compress on your child’s face and see your child’s dentist as soon as possible.

What if my child bites his tongue or lip – how do I treat it?

If your child bites his tongue or lip, clean the area with water and apply a cold compress. See your child’s dentist or go to the emergency room as soon as possible.



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Dr. Sharif and her colleagues, who have been providing orthodontic services since the late 1990s, operate out of two fully-staffed facilities in northern Virginia.

How do I treat my child's toothache?

Rinse the mouth with warm water. Gently apply dental floss to remove any food caught between the teeth. Do not put aspirin on your child's aching tooth or gums as this may cause burning to the gum tissue. If pain persists, contact your child's dentist.

What if I'm concerned that my child's jaw may be broken?

If you think your child's jaw is broken, apply cold compresses to control the swelling. Go to your child's dentist or a hospital emergency room immediately.

How do I remove an object that's stuck in my child's mouth or teeth?

Try to gently remove objects stuck in the teeth with floss, but do not try to remove objects with a sharp or pointed instrument. See your child's dentist or go to the emergency room as soon as possible.

How can I help my child avoid a dental emergency?

Here are some of the basic precautions that can help your child avoid injury to the teeth or mouth:

- Have your child wear a mouthguard (and helmet as appropriate) when participating in sports or recreational activities. Instruct the use of scissors (supervise when the child is young); make clear that a child should never attempt to cut things with their teeth.
- Do not let children run around with objects in their mouth (eg. tooth-brush, pencils, etc.)
- Reduce trip hazards in your home; use gates to block

young children from stairways and potential dangers;

- Visit the dentist every 6 months to make sure your child's teeth are healthy and strong.
- Helping young people and their parents adapt practices that promote lifelong dental health is just one of the missions of Greater Washington Dental, which opened a second office in Merrifield last year.

"We offer over 23 years of experience in helping children and teens develop habits that will serve them for a lifetime," says Dr. Shohreh Sharif, who founded the practice. "We're now seeing patients who started with us pre-schoolers returning with children of their own. This is very gratifying. Getting to know the long-term needs of families over time is the very heart of what it means to serve your community as a caring professional."

Perhaps more importantly, Greater Washington Dentistry offers specialties in both pediatric dentistry and orthodontics in combination with general dentistry.

"We've continually expanded the practice to reflect evolving treatment solutions, and to stay ahead of the needs of a dynamic population," says Dr. Sharif, who is a *diplomate* on the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and an associate professor at the Howard University College of Dentistry. "It's a learning environment in which everyone is continually adding to their own skills and knowledge – all for the benefit of our patients."