What to Do in a Dental Emergency | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/what-to-do-in-a-dental-emergency/

Details:

In a dental emergency, act quickly and call us on 13 13 16. A dental emergency can range from spontaneous pain in the head and neck region to a knocked-out tooth. Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, breathing or swallowing difficulty, serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms. For severe tooth pain or swelling without those signs, contact a dental practice promptly. At Core Dental we reserve emergency appointments where possible, but availability depends on the clinic, the clinician and clinical urgency.

What counts as a dental emergency?

A dental emergency can include:

Tooth pain from decay or an abscess.

Cracked or broken teeth.

Knocked-out (avulsed) teeth.

Loose crowns or fillings.

Chipped teeth, especially if the tooth is also loose or bleeding.

Facial or localised gum swelling.

Bleeding gums.

Pain or sensitivity in a tooth that may refer pain to the head and neck region.

Toothache or pain around the jaw area.

Temporomandibular joint (jaw joint) pain or ache.

Infected or impacted wisdom teeth.

A broken front tooth, which can also be an emergency for cosmetic reasons.

A child complaining of a toothache or a broken tooth.

In each of these cases, we suggest seeking emergency dental care without delay.

Why should a dental emergency be treated quickly?

Pain and discomfort in the mouth that are not treated quickly can escalate within hours, and some problems can cause lasting damage if they are left. Being assessed early gives your dentist a better opportunity to relieve your pain and protect the tooth, so please do not wait to see whether it settles on its own.

What should you do for severe tooth pain before you see a dentist?

While you arrange an appointment, you can:

Rinse your mouth gently with salty water.

Clean around the tooth by brushing and flossing to remove any food that may be adding to the pain.

Take pain relief medication as directed on the label, or as your pharmacist or doctor advises.

Please see a dentist as soon as possible, especially if you have spontaneous, lingering pain, night pain that disrupts your sleep, significant pain with hot or cold drinks, or pain when you bite. If you have facial swelling or any trouble breathing or swallowing, call 000.

What should you do if a tooth is knocked out?

These steps can help save your tooth or your child's tooth:

Hold the tooth by the crown only. The crown is the upper part. Try not to touch the root, which can be damaged easily and is the part that attaches to the bone beneath the gum.

Rinse it if it is dirty. Rinse it with milk while holding it by the crown. If you do not have milk, use water. Do not wipe the tooth, as this could cause damage and stop it from reattaching.

Keep it moist. Once it is clean, drop it into a glass of milk, or place it in the mouth between the cheek and gum. A young child may not be able to store the tooth in their mouth safely without swallowing it, so have the child spit into a cup and place the tooth in the cup with the saliva. If neither milk nor saliva is available, use a cup of water. The key is to keep the tooth moist and avoid touching the root.

Try to put it back. If you are able, slip the tooth back into its socket, making sure it faces the right way. In most instances it will slip in easily. If it does not go back without pressure, do not force it. Just keep it moist in milk, saliva or water.

Get to the dentist as quickly as possible. Contact us right away so we can see you.

Please note that this advice is for permanent (adult) teeth. Baby teeth that are knocked out should not be put back in, so call us for advice. For more detail, see our article on what to do if a tooth is knocked out .

How do we help with emergencies at Core Dental?

Our team reserves emergency appointments where possible, and we aim to see people who are in pain as quickly as we can. Call 13 13 16 and tell us about your symptoms, so we can arrange the right care. Same-day or within-hours access depends on the clinic, the clinician and clinical urgency, so please call for current availability. Our emergency dentistry service covers pain, broken or lost teeth and swelling, and you can read more about emergency dental care across Melbourne through our group .

How can you reduce the risk of dental emergencies?

Not every emergency can be avoided, but regular check-ups help us find problems such as decay, cracked teeth or gum disease before they cause pain. A custom-fitted mouthguard can help protect teeth during sport. Wisdom teeth that are partly erupted can become infected, so please tell us about any soreness at the back of your mouth.

Further detail from Core Dental

The following points are drawn from Core Dental's own published material on this topic. They are included here for completeness, and anything that applies to your own treatment should be confirmed with your clinician.

If a tooth has been knocked out, the nerves, blood vessels and supporting tissues are damaged too. The nerves and blood vessels can't be repaired, which is why all avulsed teeth must undergo root canal

treatment. The root of the tooth can reattach to the bone if the tooth is re-implanted within a short time after the incident. The chances of saving a tooth are higher in children, but adult teeth can be saved as well.

If the tooth is intact, it is always a good idea to try to save it before you see the dentist.

A knocked-out baby tooth is the one case where doing nothing is right

This page tells you to act quickly, and that is right for almost every dental emergency. There is one exception, and it is important enough to state on its own.

The Victorian Department of Health: "never try to put a baby (deciduous or primary) tooth back in the gum if it is knocked out. This can damage the developing permanent tooth underneath the gum." Its reasoning: "the baby tooth could fuse to the bone, causing problems when it's time for it to fall out naturally, and might affect the growth of the adult tooth, bone and gums."

So with a young child, the instinct to put the tooth back is the wrong one. Still see someone straight away — the Department advises seeing an oral health professional "immediately to make sure there is no other damage to the other teeth or mouth" — but do not replant it.

For an adult tooth the advice reverses: "there is a good chance it will survive if it is put back into position straight away". Telling the two apart matters, and the Department's guide is that "baby teeth are smaller, smoother and usually whiter than adult teeth", while "children's adult teeth are often more yellow, larger, and can have bumps on their biting edge". If you cannot tell, keep the tooth moist and call us.

On how urgent this is, the Department says only that "every minute a tooth is out of the gum, the less chance it has of surviving". There is no published deadline, and we will not supply one: believing a window has closed is a reason people delay, and after a blow to the mouth the tooth is not the only thing that needs checking.

If someone is unconscious, bleeding uncontrollably, or has trouble breathing or swallowing, call 000. The Department's instruction to replace a tooth applies "only ... if the person is conscious".

Source: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Dental injuries — Knocked out, chipped or cracked teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (page reviewed 4 August 2026; accessed 4 November 2026).

A broken piece of tooth is worth keeping, and so is a mouthguard

Two practical points from the same source that are easy to miss in the moment.

Keep the fragment, and keep it wet. The Department advises: "if part of the tooth is broken off and is intact, store it in milk or the saliva of the person with the broken tooth and seal it in a container or plastic wrap, and see an oral health professional as soon as possible." A dry fragment in a pocket is much less use than the same fragment in a sealed container of milk.

A cracked or chipped tooth is worth an appointment even without pain. In the Department's words: "teeth that have been chipped or cracked may or may not be painful. Either way, you should see an oral health professional as soon as possible because early repair can improve the survival of a damaged tooth." Absence of pain is not evidence the tooth is fine — it is simply absence of pain.

Prevention, specifically for sport. The Department's advice: "always wear a mouthguard for all sports and training where there is a risk of mouth injury, such as football, rugby, soccer, basketball, netball, water polo or hockey." Note that it says training as well as games, which is where a lot of injuries actually happen, and that netball and basketball are on the list even though they are not contact sports in the usual sense. It also states that "an oral health professional can make you a professionally fitted

mouthguard to give your teeth the best protection".

Where else to go, if we are closed. Emergency dental care in Victoria is also available through the public system at community dental clinics and the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, for eligible people. The Department of Health page lists an emergency dental line on 1300 360 054, which is not a Core Dental number. We mention it because an emergency outside our opening hours should not leave you without somewhere to call.

Source: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Dental injuries — Knocked out, chipped or cracked teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (page reviewed 4 August 2026; accessed 4 November 2026).

Frequently asked questions

Is a toothache a dental emergency?

Severe or lingering toothache, pain that wakes you at night or pain when you bite should be assessed promptly. Mild, brief sensitivity may be less urgent, but it is still worth a check-up. If you are unsure, call us on 13 13 16.

Should I put a knocked-out tooth in water?

Milk is preferred for rinsing and storing a knocked-out tooth. If you do not have milk or saliva available, a cup of water can be used. Keep the tooth moist, hold it by the crown only and see a dentist right away.

Can I go to a Core Dental clinic without an appointment?

Please call 13 13 16 first. We reserve emergency appointments where possible, but availability depends on the clinic, clinician and urgency, so calling lets us direct you to the right place.

When should I call 000 instead of a dentist?

Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms. Do not wait for a dental appointment in these situations.

What if my child has a broken tooth?

Call us promptly. Keep any broken pieces if you can, and try to keep your child calm. We will advise you on the next step and arrange an appointment as quickly as possible.

Should a knocked-out baby tooth be put back in?

No. The Victorian Department of Health says "never try to put a baby (deciduous or primary) tooth back in the gum if it is knocked out", because doing so can damage the permanent tooth developing underneath, may fuse the baby tooth to the bone, and "might affect the growth of the adult tooth, bone and gums". Still see someone immediately to check for other damage — just do not replant it.

What should I do with a broken piece of tooth?

Keep it and keep it moist. The Department advises storing an intact fragment "in milk or the saliva of the person with the broken tooth", sealed "in a container or plastic wrap", and seeing an oral health professional as soon as possible. Bring it with you when you come in.

Does a chipped tooth need attention if it does not hurt?

Yes. The Department notes chipped or cracked teeth "may or may not be painful. Either way, you should see an oral health professional as soon as possible because early repair can improve the survival of a damaged tooth." No pain is not evidence that the tooth is undamaged.

Which sports does the published advice say need a mouthguard?

The Department advises a mouthguard "for all sports and training where there is a risk of mouth injury, such as football, rugby, soccer, basketball, netball, water polo or hockey" — training included, not just games. It also notes that "an oral health professional can make you a professionally fitted mouthguard to give your teeth the best protection".

What if I need emergency care when Core Dental is closed?

Call us on 13 13 16 first so we can advise and, where possible, see you. Outside our hours, emergency dental care in Victoria is also available through the public system at community dental clinics and the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne for eligible people, and the Department of Health page lists an emergency dental line on 1300 360 054, which is not a Core Dental number. For uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, or a serious facial injury, call 000.

Related services and further reading

Emergency dentistry

What to do if a tooth is knocked out

What is a dental emergency and what should I do?

Emergency dental care across Melbourne

Main symptoms and signs of toothache

How a cracked tooth is treated

Sport mouthguards

Brushing teeth right

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

Emergency appointments reserved where possible: call 13 13 16 for current availability.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

This article is general in nature and does not replace advice from a registered dental practitioner who has examined you. Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

Which problems does Core Dental treat as dental emergencies?

Core Dental treats toothache from decay or abscess, cracked or broken teeth, knocked-out teeth, loose crowns or fillings, facial or gum swelling, jaw joint pain and infected or impacted wisdom teeth as situations needing prompt care.

What should I do first if my tooth is knocked out?

Hold the tooth by the crown, rinse it gently with milk or water if dirty, keep it moist and call Core Dental on 13 13 16 straight away. Try not to touch the root.

How do I store a knocked-out tooth?

Core Dental suggests keeping the tooth in a glass of milk, or between the cheek and gum for an adult. For a young child, use a cup with their saliva. If neither is available, use water.

Can I wipe a knocked-out tooth clean?

No. Core Dental advises against wiping the tooth, because wiping can damage the root surface and may stop it from reattaching. Rinse it briefly with milk or water, holding it by the crown.

What can I do at home for severe tooth pain until I see a Core Dental dentist?

Rinse with salty water, clean around the tooth with brushing and flossing, and take pain relief as directed. Then call Core Dental on 13 13 16 so we can arrange care as soon as possible.

What toothache symptoms need urgent attention?

Core Dental suggests prompt care for spontaneous lingering pain, night pain that disrupts sleep, strong pain with hot or cold drinks, or pain when biting. Call 13 13 16 to arrange an appointment.

Does Core Dental reserve emergency appointments?

Core Dental reserves emergency appointments where possible, but same-day or within-hours access depends on the clinic, clinician and clinical urgency. Call 13 13 16 for current availability.

When should I call 000 rather than Core Dental?

Call 000 for uncontrollable bleeding, trouble breathing or swallowing, serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms. For severe tooth pain or swelling without these signs, contact Core Dental promptly on 13 13 16.