

# Dealing with a dental emergency

**M**unching on a handful of popcorn, you suddenly feel a shooting pain in your mouth.

Fearing that you may have broken a tooth, you ponder what to do.

Knowing what to do during a dental emergency can mean the difference between losing and saving a tooth. Learn how to handle some common dental emergencies with these tips from the American Dental Association:

**Knocked-out tooth.** If you lose a tooth: ➤ Hold the tooth by the top and gently rinse it off with water. Avoid touching the root. ➤ Carefully place the clean tooth back in its socket, or put the tooth in a cup of milk. ➤ See your dentist right away.

**Chipped, broken, or loose tooth.** For a chipped or broken tooth: ➤ Rinse

the mouth with warm water to clean the area. ➤ Apply a cold compress to the area to help reduce swelling. ➤ Collect any broken tooth fragments. ➤ See your dentist right away.


For a loose tooth, hold the tooth in place with a moist tissue or gauze. Do not try to force the tooth back into place. Try to see your dentist within 30 minutes.

## **Objects caught between the teeth.**

If you have something stuck in your teeth, try to gently remove the object with dental floss. Be careful not to cut the gums. If you can't remove the object with dental floss, call your dentist.

Finally, while accidents do happen, there are steps you can take to protect your teeth. Always wear a mouth guard while playing sports, and don't chew ice, popcorn kernels, or hard candy, which can crack teeth.

Additional source: American College of Emergency Physicians



To learn more about dental health, visit the New Mexico Dental Association website at [nmdental.org](http://nmdental.org).