

Dental Trauma

- A 13 year old male comes to the emergency department immediately after being punched in the mouth by his older brother. He is holding his completely avulsed lower central incisor (#24) in his hand. In addition to pain management, which of the following is the most appropriate next step in management?



- A. Discard the tooth and refer the patient to a cosmetic dentist for an implant.
- B. Irrigate the socket, prescribe antibiotics, and tell the patient to follow up with his regular dentist tomorrow.
- C. Replace the tooth immediately and apply digital pressure until the on-call dentist arrives.
- D. Place the tooth in milk and page the on-call dentist.

The correct answer is C

- Do not discard the tooth as it may be salvageable.
- The patient will need antibiotics at discharge but the first priority is replacing the tooth and dental consultation. The tooth itself may be cleaned with saline if necessary.
- This is an acceptable alternative in uncooperative patients; however, the best thing to do is replace the tooth in the socket.

Dental Trauma

- A 3 year old boy is running in the house and hits a wall. He knocks out his lower central incisor. In addition to pain management, which of the following is the most appropriate next step in management?
 - A. Give the boy a dollar and discharge him home with antibiotics.
 - B. Place the tooth in warm milk and page the on-call dentist.
 - C. Replace the tooth and page the on-call dentist.
 - D. Sedate the child and page the on-call dentist who will replace the tooth

The correct answer is A

- Because the tooth is a primary tooth, attempts to replace it should not be made.
- The risks of infection as well as those of the complicated treatment outweigh the benefit of replacing the tooth as incisors are not essential to normal orofacial development.

Dental Trauma

- An 8 year old girl is brought to the emergency room after falling and hitting her chin on the sidewalk. Inspection of the mouth shows a 5 mm laceration to the lower lip and a fracture of one of the upper incisors. The fractured portion appears yellow. Which of the following is the most appropriate next step?
 - A. Palpate the laceration to check for portions of the fractured tooth and irrigate the wound if none are found.
 - B. Obtain an x-ray of the mouth/jaw.
 - C. Suture the laceration and advise the patient to follow up tomorrow with her regular dentist.
 - D. Discharge the patient home with antibiotics and encourage her to make an appointment with a cosmetic dentist for repair of the fractured tooth.

The correct answer is B

- Inspection and palpation of the wound are likely to be insufficient when small foreign objects (eg, parts of teeth) may be inside.
- An X-ray should be obtained to rule out retained foreign bodies in oral lacerations, especially in the setting of fractured teeth.
- If a laceration does not go through the lip to the skin and does not cross the vermillion border, suturing is not required.
- Fractured teeth generally require emergency care only when the fracture includes the pulp which generally appears as a red area when the fracture is inspected; otherwise, the patient can follow up with his or her regular dentist in the morning.

References

- Photo:
<http://www.rockymtnendo.com/blog/bid/88807/What-to-Do-When-You-Knock-out-a-Tooth>
- Needleman, Howard, and Brian Grove. "Dental Emergency Care." *Rudolph's Pediatrics*. 22nd ed. McGraw-Hill Companies, 2011.