

## **Saving Knocked-Out Teeth During Little League**

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Studies have shown that 25% of school-aged children will experience some kind of dental trauma each year. This means that approximately 700,000 little league participants will experience a dental trauma this year. Over five million teeth are knocked-out each year and many of these teeth are knocked-out during physical activities including little league baseball. Therefore, any little league coach or parent should be prepared to institute the optimum treatment for knocked-out teeth.

All knocked-out teeth can be saved, but this can only be achieved with the institution of correct care. In the case of knocked-out teeth, being prepared and knowing what to do can mean the difference between little leaguers losing knocked-out teeth for life or keeping their own natural smiles.

For an eight year old whose teeth are knocked-out, he or she is faced with a lifetime of dental woes. It's been estimated that the replacement and treatment of one knocked-out tooth in an eight year old can cost an average of \$30,000 in their lifetime. The cost in pain, time, and embarrassment can't be measured.

So what will you do when Johnny trips on his way to first base or Suzy gets hit with a fly ball?

### **Immediate treatment of knocked-out teeth**

If possible, knocked-out teeth should be replanted immediately. When a tooth is picked up, always grasp it by the enamel on the crown; finger pressure on the tooth root cells will crush them. Any debris must be gently washed off with sterile saline, never scrubbed. The knocked-out tooth should be grasped by the crown of the tooth and inserted into the socket. Steady, gentle pressure should then be exerted; it may take as long as 30-60 seconds to seat the tooth completely. Then the little leaguer should gently bite on a piece of gauze to hold the tooth in place until treatment by a dentist is received. If the tooth does not go back into place or immediate replantation is not possible due to other factors, transport the

tooth must be transported in a safe way and brought to a dentist immediately.

Although the best treatment for a knocked-out tooth is immediate replantation, for a variety of reasons this can be difficult. The first difficulty is that the teeth are often covered with grass and dirt from the field. This debris must be washed off with a physiological solution and not scrubbed. Often multiple teeth are knocked-out and a coach or parent probably won't know into which socket an individual tooth belongs. The child may have other more serious injuries that require more immediate attention such as an eye injury or an injury that prevents easy visualization of the socket like a bleeding lacerated lip. The child may be in severe pain and may not allow replantation of the teeth into the sockets.

If you are unable to replant the teeth at the scene of the accident, the teeth need to be protected from two key risk factors: tooth root cell crushing and loss of nutrients. The tooth needs to be placed in a container that will not cause the tooth root cells to touch any hard surfaces. Tissues and gauze both crush the cells and dry them out. Glass and cardboard containers cause the tooth to bump into the sides and also run the risk of spilling. The fluid in the containers needs to provide the right pressure environment for the cells and be able to replace the nutrients the tooth root cells need to survive.

For all of the above reasons, the coach or parent should have optimum storage devices available at every practice and sporting venue. There is a commercial product called Save-A-Tooth<sup>®</sup> that provides the optimal environment for knocked-out teeth. It contains a pH-balanced cell preserving solution, called Hank's Balanced Salt Solution, with a removable basket and net that suspends knocked-out teeth in the solution preventing additional cell crushing. Save-A-Tooth<sup>®</sup> has a shatterproof container with a tightly fitting top that allows it to be stored anywhere, including an equipment bag, for easy accessibility. Save-A-Tooth<sup>®</sup> is available through several sports-oriented distributors and direct by visiting [www.save-a-tooth.com](http://www.save-a-tooth.com) or by calling (888) 788-6684.

By having optimum storage devices available for knocked-out tooth storage, the coaches and parents will be prepared for every contingency and will provide the dentist with the best possible conditions for the replantation procedure. Now, if Sam over-swings the bat into Timothy, your catcher, you will know how to save Timmy's smile.