

Why back to school should include a dental checkup

August 19 2024, by Robin Foster



As kids head back to school this fall, there is probably one item many parents haven't thought to put on the to-do list: dental checkups.

But they should make sure their [children's](#) teeth are in good shape, said Dr. Natasha Flake, president of the American Association of Endodontists.

First, remember that kids grow, and so do their teeth, Flake noted. That matters most for kids who wear mouthguards while playing sports. Growth spurts, losing teeth and having new ones come in can change the fit of the mouthguard, so it may be time to have it checked for the right fit.

What else should be checked? After a long summer of potentially bad dental hygiene, cavities can form. So, it's a good time to get your kid's teeth cleaned and remind them of the importance of good dental habits. If your [child](#) develops [tooth](#) pain, seek out an endodontist, Flake added.

What if your child is unlucky and gets a tooth knocked out just before school starts?

More than 5 million [teeth](#) are knocked out every year in children and adults, according to Flake. Children under the age of 10 are extremely susceptible to this injury, so a back-to-school dental visit can teach parents and their kids how to handle a knocked-out tooth, Flake said.

Here are four things to do when a tooth is knocked out:

- **Find the tooth immediately.** Pick it up by the crown, not the root, and handle it carefully. To minimize injury to the root, touch only the crown. If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse it with water.
- **Insert the tooth back into its socket as soon as possible.** The sooner the tooth is back in its socket, the greater the chances it will survive. Gently push the tooth into the socket with your fingers. Hold the tooth in place with your fingers or have the

injured person gently bite down on it. A gauze pad can be used to bite on as well.

- **Keep the tooth moist at all times.** The tooth must not be left outside the mouth to dry. If it cannot be placed back in the socket, place the tooth in an emergency tooth preservation kit or milk. If none of these options are practical, use water.
- **Seek professional help immediately.** You may wish to see an endodontist or the nearest available dentist as quickly as possible. Endodontists have completed an additional two or more years of training beyond [dental school](#), so their advanced training makes them ideally suited to save a knocked-out tooth in many cases, Flake said.

More information: Nemours Kids Health has more on [dental care for kids](#).

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Citation: Why back to school should include a dental checkup (2024, August 19) retrieved 19 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-08-school-dental-checkup.html>

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