

Splints for damaged permanent adult teeth in children

Information for parents of children with splints placed on loose, moved or knocked out adult teeth.

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Introduction

Children and teenagers may suffer dental injuries, with damage to their teeth, gums and face. These injuries may be a result of falls, collisions and accidents while playing sports.

Teeth can be:

- loosened or wobbly
- fractured or broken
- displaced or moved out of position (Figure 1, p4)
- knocked out.

Dental trauma

Dental trauma (injury) can affect the future of teeth and so it is important to seek dental care following trauma.

Trauma can happen to primary (baby) teeth or permanent (adult) teeth. The treatment will be different depending on whether primary or permanent teeth are involved.

If an adult tooth is loosened or knocked out, it may need to be moved back, or replaced, into its normal position. This is done by applying some pressure.

Following this, the tooth may need a splint to hold it in place.

What is a splint?

A fixed splint is usually made of a thin, flexible wire and a special cement.

The injured tooth is held securely in its correct position by fixing a splint to the tooth and one or more teeth on either side (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1
A tooth moved out following an accident.



Figure 2
The tooth moved back into the correct position. A fixed splint was used to hold the tooth in its correct position.

The splint is usually left on the teeth for two to four weeks, depending on the type of injury.

In some circumstances, a splint may need to be left on the tooth for up to four months if the root of the tooth is fractured.

A removable splint is sometimes used, which may look like a sports mouth guard.

How to care for your child's teeth while a splint is in place

- Teeth should be **brushed** gently using a soft toothbrush, twice a day (morning and night) and ideally after eating, especially around the splint.
- Use **Corsodyl mouthwash** (0.2% w/v) or **Corsodyl dental gel** (1% w/w) as instructed by your dentist.
- Eat **soft food** while the splint is in place, such as pasta, soups, yoghurt, bananas, etc. Try to avoid hard foods.

The hospital dentist seeing you today will recommend appropriate pain relief for your child such as paracetamol (Calpol®).

Future appointments

These will depend on the type of injury that your child had. It may be just one or two visits to the hospital and then your child may be discharged to their regular dentist for follow-up.

If the damage to your child's teeth is worse, they may need to have special appointments for a number of years.

The hospital dentist may want to see your child a few days after the splint is placed, to check the teeth and see if the splint is secure.

If the splint becomes loose between appointments, you will need to return with your child to your own dentist or the emergency clinic in the Paediatric Dentistry Department at St Thomas' Hospital (Monday to Friday, 9am-11am) as soon as possible, to have the splint fixed.

Your child will need to avoid contact sports while the splint is in place.

Bring your child to appointments as instructed.
A splint can damage the teeth if left in place for too long.

Complications following trauma to teeth

Complications include sensitivity, pain and damage to the nerve of the tooth.

Damage to the nerve may lead to infection, which would require root canal treatment. This procedure involves removing the infected or dead nerve, sometimes with local anaesthetic (numbing of the tooth).

Root canal treatment may take several visits to complete.

In teeth that have been completely knocked out (avulsed) and put back in, root canal treatment may not work and the tooth may eventually have to be removed and replaced with a false tooth. Sometimes the infected root may start to dissolve (resorb). This also may result in the loss of the tooth and a need for a false tooth.

Prevention

If your child plays any contact or ball sports, such as football, rugby or hockey, it is advisable for them to wear a mouth guard to protect the teeth.

If your child still has primary teeth as well as permanent teeth then it may be advisable to get a mouth guard from a sports shop. Mouth guards can be changed as your child grows and their primary teeth are replaced by permanent teeth.

Contact details

Paediatric Dentistry Department, Dental Centre, Ground Floor South Wing (Purple Zone), St Thomas' Hospital, **t:** 020 7188 7188, extensions 50203 or 50202

For more leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

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If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

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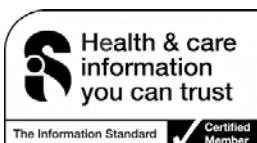
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