

Getting a handle on family dental emergencies

By KIM GLOVER, R.D.H.

Dental emergencies can happen at any time. And they always seem to occur at an inconvenient time such as a three-day weekend or a holiday. When your child is having a dental problem, wouldn't it be nice to know what needs immediate attention and what can wait a day or two until regular dental business hours? Dr. Norm Saager at Broadway Family Dental offered these suggestions for some common dental issues:

A filling comes out. Leave the filling out. If the tooth is not sensitive and your child can chew on the other side of his mouth, it will be just fine until the next business day. Because the hole will catch food, it may feel better with

some temporary filling material packed into it. You can find this at a drugstore.

Pain while chewing. If your child can still chew food on the other side of his mouth, it is usually safe to wait over the weekend. If he cannot eat, or if he is very uncomfortable, call a dentist.

Throbbing tooth while lying down, or swollen gums or a swollen cheek. These are signs of an infection and an after-hours call to a dentist is a good idea. Your dentist may prescribe an antibiotic to get through a weekend, and it is likely the tooth will need some treatment the next week.

Chipped tooth/rough spot. A small chip probably won't be a problem over a weekend. If a sharp

spot keeps bothering your child's tongue, it is usually okay to smooth it yourself with an emery board — just smooth off a teensy bit; don't do any major remodeling!

Broken tooth. If it does not hurt, it may be okay to wait over a weekend. But broken teeth can be worrisome, so if you are really concerned, go ahead and call your dentist.

A broken front tooth is different. Call your dentist for advice — you and your dentist will probably want to take care of a broken front tooth over the weekend. If your dentist gives you his or her cell phone number, maybe you can text a photo of the broken tooth to help decide the severity of the break.

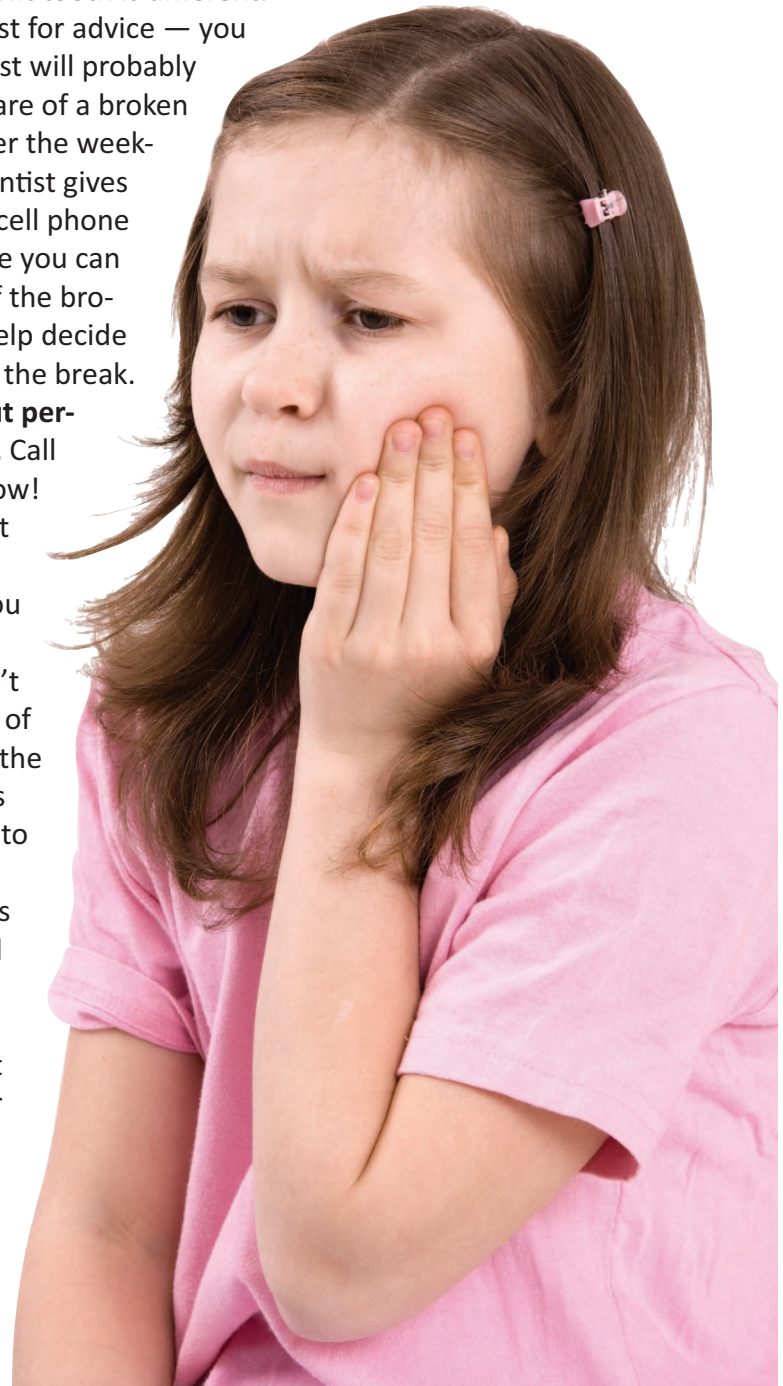
Knocked-out permanent tooth. Call your dentist now! You have about an hour to get treatment if you want to save the tooth. Don't touch the root of the tooth. Put the tooth in a glass of milk and go to your dentist.

If your child is having a dental problem, but you are unsure whether or not to contact your dentist, Dr. Saager says it's never a bad idea to call and get your dentist's opinion.



Family Health

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