

# Permanent Tooth Injury (Dental Trauma) in Children

This leaflet explains more about permanent tooth dental trauma and aims to provide information on what it is, how it is managed and what to expect.

If you have any further questions, please ask the dentist looking after your child.

## Types of dental trauma

Dental trauma is a relatively common injury in children and can involve their teeth, tongue, lips and face as well as bone and gums around their teeth. Such injury can occur because of trips or falls, sporting accidents and even road traffic injuries.

Teeth can be broken (fractured), loosened (made wobbly), displaced (moved out of position) and knocked out.

## How should dental trauma be managed?

You should take your child to a dentist as soon as possible so that the injury can be properly assessed and treated to achieve the best possible outcome for the tooth / teeth.

If there are other injuries (e.g. your child passed out or suffered other injuries elsewhere on the body) these may need to be seen by a doctor first before seeing a dentist.

Adult teeth that have been loosened, moved out of position or knocked out may need to be moved back or re-implanted into their correct position. Such teeth are then held in place by a splint for a few weeks to allowing healing of the area and the teeth to firm up. Local anaesthetic maybe required to do this.

## What is a splint?

A fixed splint is usually made of a thin, flexible metal wire attached to the affected tooth / teeth and one or two healthy unaffected teeth either side of this. This stabilises the injured tooth / teeth to facilitate healing and promote 'firming up' of the teeth. The dentist will advise for how long the splint should be left on the teeth. This usually ranges from two to four weeks but depends on the type of injury and can be longer.



BEFORE: Injured tooth in wrong position.



AFTER: Tooth repositioned with splint in situ.

Sometimes a removable splint (which resembles a mouth guard / retainer) is used instead of a fixed wire.

## Looking after a splint

Good oral hygiene around a splint is important for good healing and to maintain good gum and tooth health. Help your child to brush their teeth carefully and gently especially around the splint at least twice daily and ideally after eating. Your dentist will advise you if an additional antibacterial mouthwash or gel is required. We recommend avoiding eating hard, sticky or chewy foods whilst the splint is in place. Avoid contact sports while the splint is in place.

## Future care

This will depend on the type of injury that your child has. If they are wearing a splint, this will need to be removed. Further assessment and x-rays of the teeth may be required and your dentist will advise what treatment or follow up is required. Your child may be discharged to their regular dentist for follow up.

If the dental injury is more complex, your dentist will discuss the treatment that is required. You may need to bring your child for a number of appointments and there may be a period of monitoring involved to determine the longer term outcomes of the teeth.

## What is going to happen to the injured teeth?

The nerve and blood supply to the injured tooth may have been disrupted by the trauma and / or exposed to bacteria from within the mouth. The type and severity of the injury, how and when it was / is managed and your child's ability to cope with dental treatment can all influence the outcome.

Injured teeth may be sensitive and/ or painful and result in nerve death which may cause infection. If the nerve dies off, root canal treatment will be required to keep the tooth (see separate leaflet). This may take several appointments and x-rays and might result in discolouration of the tooth and further weakening of an already weak tooth.

Root canal treatment may be done to simply prolong the life of the tooth in the short to medium term (e.g. for some knocked out adult teeth that have been put back in). It may not be successful or even be appropriate to do this treatment in more severe injuries like this. Such teeth may have to be removed and replaced with a false tooth. Your dentist will discuss this with you.

## Preventing dental trauma

We recommend the use of a sports mouth guard if your child plays any contact or ball sports (e.g. football, rugby or hockey). Replacement mouth guards may be required as your child grows and adult teeth replace baby teeth.

## What now?

We will discuss all appropriate treatment options with you and encourage you to ask any questions you may have. We often seek the opinion of other specialist dentists to ensure we are continuing to provide your child with a high standard of care.

## Helpful Resources

[www.dentaltrauma.co.uk](http://www.dentaltrauma.co.uk)

<https://dentaltraumaguide.org>

[www.bspd.co.uk](http://www.bspd.co.uk)

## Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the paediatric dental team on 020 8672 1255 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

## AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

*Part of the contents of this leaflet has been adapted for use with permission from the Department of Paediatric Dentistry at Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Trust.*



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