

# Quick Thinking Can Save Your Child's Tooth



During the summer months, we see an epidemic of bicycle and sports accidents. Even virtual-reality arcade rides can put a youngster at risk for losing a tooth.

**A**bie was playing a motorcycle video arcade game, where the player sits on a motorcycle seat holding onto handlebars, and watches the video screen, which shows scenes of the motorcycle going up and down hills, over bumps, around sharp turns and into a ditch. The “motorcycle” bounces and moves in synchrony with the video. This gives the participant a very realistic feeling – perhaps a little too realistic...

While Abie was holding onto the handlebars, the motorcycle took a virtual bump. His entire body was jolted, and he banged his lower jaw and teeth against the handlebars. The next thing he knew his lower front permanent tooth was knocked out of his jaw.

Luckily, his mother was nearby. She understood what must have happened – and she began to search the floor of the arcade for the lost tooth. She spotted it, picked it up, and gently replaced it into the gum so that the tooth lined it up with the other teeth. That all happened within 90 seconds of the tooth being knocked out.

Dental studies have shown that if a tooth is replaced within the first hour of being knocked out, there is a 90 percent chance that the tooth will “take” and be accepted by the bone. The results are most predictable in a case like Abie’s, for two reasons – the tooth

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## WHAT TO DO IF A TOOTH IS KNOCKED OUT:



Keep the tooth moist. Put the tooth in a glass of milk or saline solution (like the kind you use for your contact lenses).



Get to a dentist immediately. Or, if you’re like Abie’s mother, and are not squeamish about blood, replace the tooth immediately.

was replaced quickly, and the floor of the arcade was basically clean. If the tooth had landed in the mud, it would have needed to be cleaned before being placed in the mouth. The root of the tooth has microscopic fibers that will reattach to the bone, but if the tooth is left out of the mouth too long, these fibers will dry out and be unable to reattach. Even if the tooth is kept moist, these fibers will deteriorate if the tooth remains out of the mouth too long.

In some cases, a tooth that has been re-implanted is “splinted.” Splinting is the process of using a wire or adhesive bonding material to connect the re-implanted tooth to the adjacent teeth. While this may seem logical, our experience has been that a single tooth that has been re-implanted will do better without the splinting, as long as

the tooth is not being traumatized by the bite. In Abie’s case, there was no contact from the upper tooth. The reason I prefer to avoid splinting is that the extra material makes the teeth more difficult to clean, resulting in a buildup of bacterial plaque around the splint material. This makes these teeth more likely to get infected.

So remember, think quickly and get that tooth back in place. Then get to a dentist to examine the area. The difference between a predictable result and a lost tooth could be a matter of minutes.



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