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Quick action can save a knocked out tooth

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U.S. endodontic experts advise that if a tooth gets knocked out because of an injury, quick action can save the day.

When teeth do get knocked out, John S. Olmsted, president of the American Association of Endodontists, says the key is to act quickly, yet calmly, and follow five simple steps to save the tooth:

- Pick up the tooth by the crown -- the chewing surface -- not the root and handle the tooth carefully by the crown, avoiding the tooth opening, to help minimize injury to the root;

- If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse it with a spray of water and take care not to handle the root surface, but don't use soap or chemicals, scrub or dry the tooth, or wrap it in a tissue or cloth;

- Reposition the tooth in the socket immediately, if possible, and close the mouth slowly and hold the tooth in place with fingers or by gently biting down on it;

- Keep the tooth moist at all times -- if it can't be replaced in the socket, put it in a glass of milk or in the mouth next to the cheek.

- See an endodontist within 30 minutes.