



# The Key To Getting Through A Dental Emergency Abroad



Dr. Steven Katz, president of the American Association of Endodontists, discusses what to do when your teeth cause trouble while traveling.

## What constitutes a dental emergency?

Anything that prevents you from functioning. If you can't eat, sleep, or complete everyday activities due to pain in your teeth or gums, that's an emergency.

## What should travelers do if they have dental pain while traveling?

First, call your dentist back home. They might have a connection to a trusted colleague in your location. Second, look for a dental society, association, or dental school in your area. Their staff can often refer you to a nearby provider depending on what they think you may need. Often a reputable hotel can serve as a valuable resource. If you think you might need a root canal, a great resource is [findmyendodontist.com](http://findmyendodontist.com). Social media is *not* a good place for referrals.

## What about a dental emergency while traveling abroad?

Again, start with a call to your dentist. If you're in a remote or less developed region, it will be difficult to find specialized care. A reputable

hotel or tour company is a good bet for getting connected to the most capable dental professional in the area. Generally, you don't want to end up in the emergency room, since they typically don't have a dentist on site. That said, it's better to see any healthcare provider than to not seek treatment at all, which could result in losing the tooth. Endodontists advocate saving teeth as nothing looks, functions, or feels like our natural teeth.

The most important thing is to stay current on your dental check-ups prior to travel so that you're not ignoring problems going into a vacation. If your dentist tells you there's a problem, take care of it immediately, *before* you leave on your trip.

## How can travelers prevent or avoid dental emergencies?

The biggest thing is to not ignore a known dental problem prior to traveling. The air pressure changes from airline travel or activities such as scuba diving can exacerbate something from a minor annoyance into a true emergency. Root canal problems can lead to infection, and it's not a question of *if* you'll need treatment, it's a question of *when*. Root canal issues are ticking time bombs.

## What if someone knocks out a tooth on vacation?

Get to a dentist as soon as you can. If possible, put the tooth back in the socket right away. This greatly increases the chances of an improved outcome. If you can't get it back in the socket, store the tooth in milk until you can see a dental provider.

## Any other tips for safe dental health while traveling?

Don't be afraid to travel with your electric toothbrush. It's my favorite item to take with me when I travel, because I just don't feel like my teeth are getting clean without it. Also, avoid chewing on hard things like ice, peanuts, or popcorn kernels, which can break teeth.

I think everyone should travel with an emergency medical kit that includes ibuprofen or acetaminophen, and possibly antibiotics, because accidents happen. Remember, oral health is very connected to overall health. It affects cognitive development, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and many other ailments. It's very important to stay on top of your oral health because it affects everything else in your body—whether at home or while traveling.



## About the American Association of Endodontists

The American Association of Endodontists is a global resource for knowledge, research, and education for professionals, members, and the public. Endodontists are specialists in saving teeth. They have additional training and use specialized techniques and technologies to perform root canal treatment and diagnosis and treat tooth pain. While all endodontists are dentists, less than 3% of dentists are endodontists.

For more information about endodontists and finding one in your area, visit [findmyendodontist.com](http://findmyendodontist.com).

