Traumatic Dental Injuries

Information for patients

This leaflet will explain in detail the type of injury you have sustained to your tooth/teeth and/or surrounding tissues, and the treatment(s) you may receive from us.

What is dental trauma?

Dental trauma is an umbrella term that includes injuries to the teeth and possibly the lips, gums, and tongue.

Types of injury (trauma) and the treatment I will need

- **Tooth fracture**

  Your tooth has broken. A break or fracture may involve the crown of the tooth (the visible part), the root or both. Depending on the extent of the fracture, the tooth may be treated either by sticking back the tooth fragments, restoring, or building up your tooth with a white filling or crown. Sometimes the tooth needs to be removed if heavily damaged and it cannot be restored.

- **Tooth displacement**

  Your tooth has been displaced and pushed from its normal position. This may be repositioned and 'splinted' into place. This allows the tooth to heal in the correct position and the splint prevents further movement.

- **Tooth Avulsion**

  An avulsed tooth means that the tooth has completely come out of its socket. Avulsed teeth can generally be placed back into the tooth socket and splinted for a minimum of two weeks. Root canal treatment will then need to be carried out either with your local dentist or in the Edinburgh Dental Institute.

Following injury to teeth, there are several symptoms that you may experience and possible consquences. These include:

- Tooth sensitivity

- Pain or discomfort when chewing

- Damage to the nerve of the tooth (the dental pulp).

- Root canal infection: root canal treatment may then be required, which involves removal of the infected or dead nerve, and cleaning and filling the space where it has been.

- Discoloration: injured teeth can become discoloured (black, grey, yellow, or red).

- Root resorption: The root structure breaks down over time.

- Ankylosis: the root of the tooth is replaced by bone.

- Loss of the tooth: the tooth may eventually have to be removed and replaced.

What are the replacement options if I lose my tooth?

- **Lose the tooth**

  If the missing tooth is near the back of your mouth and not visible when you talk and smile, it may be possible to leave the space. In many cases, this does not cause concern about appearance and function. However, if the surrounding teeth move into the space, tooth replacement may be more difficult and additional treatment may be required.

- **Insert a Bridge**

  A bridge is a false tooth that is supported by one or both teeth on either side of the space. These are fixed replacements of the missing teeth. A resin bonded bridge is a porcelain tooth with a metal wing, which bonds to the back of the tooth next to a missing tooth to replace it.
  A conventional bridge involves drilling of your teeth next to the space and placing a bridge which fits over the stumps of these teeth.

- **Denture(s)**

  A denture is a removable way of replacing teeth which rest on the surrounding teeth and gums. This can be either a temporary or permanent replacement.

- **Dental Implant**

    A dental implant is an artificial titanium root that is placed in the jawbone by means of a surgical procedure. This can support crowns, bridges and also help to retain dentures.

What will happen next?

We will take clinical photographs, and carry out a full examination and any additional X-ray pictures needed to check for signs of infection. We may need to take a scan, which is a special type of X-ray equipment used to produce three dimensional images of your teeth when regular dental X-rays are not enough.

Complications can happen several years after the dental trauma; therefore, it is important to see your dentist regularly.

We will advise you whether you will be contacted for an appointment in the Department of Restorative Dentistry at the Edinburgh Dental Institute to continue your treatment, or whether you should see your local dentist for ongoing treatment.

Resources which you may find helpful:

www.dentaltrauma.co.uk

https://dentaltraumaguide.org