



# I CHIPPED A TOOTH

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

You just ate dinner at your favorite restaurant and you grab one of those hard candy mints they always have by the door on your way out. All you wanted was to freshen your breath, but when you crunched on the mint, something felt... wrong...in your mouth. You feel your teeth with your tongue. Oh no. There's a jagged edge. You chipped a tooth. Now what? First, make an appointment to see your dentist right away. Second, if you can find the chip, save it.

### Then try the following self-care tips:

- If you have pain, take an over-the-counter pain reliever. You can also rinse with salt water.
- If there's a jagged or sharp edge, you can put some dental cement, wax paraffin—both of which can be found at drugstores—or even sugarless gum over it so you don't cut the inside of your mouth or your tongue.
- Only eat soft foods so you don't bite down on the broken tooth and do further damage.

Once you're able to see the dentist, your tooth will likely be repaired in one of the following ways:

### Filling or bonding



A small chipped piece of tooth enamel can be fixed with a filling. If the chip is on the front teeth, the dentist usually performs a procedure called bonding. This uses a tooth-colored material to match your natural teeth. The dentist will use adhesive and bonding substances to bond the material to your tooth. He/she will shape the material to look like your tooth, and then use an ultraviolet light to harden the material.

### Cap or crown



If a larger piece of tooth breaks off, the dentist may choose to file down part of the remaining tooth and cover it with a toothshaped cap or a crown. These are made to protect the tooth and improve appearance. Permanent crowns can be made from many different substances, including metal, porcelain fused to metal, resin and ceramic. All have different benefits. Metal crowns are the strongest. Porcelain and resin look nearly identical to the original tooth.

If you chip a tooth, the most important thing is to see your dentist ASAP. You don't want to let a chipped tooth go without attention for too long; it can get damaged even more and be at risk for falling out completely.

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