Dental injuries are one of the most common head and facial injuries that occur in athletics. When an injury occurs, there are several factors that should be included in the evaluation. First, assessing the physical status of the athlete; which would include checking vital signs, making sure the athlete’s airway is not obstructed by either the accumulation of blood or the broken tooth. Once the vital signs have been checked and cleared, the injury evaluation can occur. Locating the injured site and determining the severity is key.

Common Injuries include lacerations to the inside of the mouth (cheeks, gums, tongue), crown fractures, displacement of the tooth/teeth, avulsion and root fractures. Laceration (tearing of the soft tissue): stop the bleeding by applying pressure with sterile gauze. Once bleeding has slowed then clean the wound while checking for debris. Most superficial lacerations to the inside of the mouth will heal on its own. If the laceration is deep then medical intervention is necessary.

While severe injuries such as displacement and avulsion require immediate dental intervention, most dental injuries are non-threatening and do not need immediate care from a dentist. Majority of the sport related dental injuries occur in sports such as basketball, baseball, softball, or rugby.

**Common Dental Fractures**

- **Enamel Fracture**
  - Also known as a chipped tooth.
  - Not a dental emergency, but does require repair.

- **Enamel Dentin Fracture**
  - Sensitivity to air, cold and touch.
  - Sometimes if the missing fragment is located placing the piece in milk can increase the life of the piece for full repair.
  - Requires immediate dental care.

- **Enamel Dentin Pulp Fracture**
  - Most serve of the crown fractures.
  - If the root apex is open, it is considered a dental emergency.
**TOOTH DISPLACEMENT**

(Involved the periodontal ligament)

*Extrusive*

*Lateral*

Repositioning the tooth is key to avoiding damage to the pulp which could result in necrosis.

Immediate dental care is necessary.

*Intrusive*

Dental Emergency

**TOOTH AVULSION**

Requires immediate intervention.

Locating and examining the tooth for debris.

The displaced tooth can be placed in milk, sterile saline or saliva for transport. (Do not transport the tooth dry, wrapped in gauze/paper towel as it could damage the tooth and lessen the chance of survival).

**Prevention**

The best way to prevent dental injuries from occurring is wearing a properly fitted mouth guard. The mouth guard helps provide protection to the soft tissue of the mouth and help absorb contact that could potentially cause damage to the teeth.

**Resources:**
