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Q & A

Should a fractured baby tooth be root canal treated or extracted?

Generally, a root canal treatment is recommended for a fractured baby (primary) tooth if one or more of the following conditions exist:-

- The fracture has resulted in the exposure of the pulp cavity (part of the tooth housing the nerves and blood vessels).
- The tooth is discoloured.
- The tooth is not scheduled to shed yet and keeping this fractured tooth is needed for the maintenance of space prior to the eruption of its successor.
- There is an abscess (gum boil) related to the fractured tooth.

If a child is cooperative, a root canal treatment can be easily done under local anaesthesia. However, if he or she is fearful and uncooperative, then treatment done under general anaesthesia or relative anaesthesia would be a preferred choice.

Would the eruption of an adult tooth be affected after a traumatic impact on the related baby tooth?

It all depends on how great the impact is. A light impact is unlikely to affect the eruption of the adult tooth. If the impact is great, especially resulting in an intrusion (a condition in which the tooth is pushed into the gum) of the baby tooth, then the development of its successor may be affected. It may erupt later than expected or it may not erupt at all. Sometimes, it may end up with a bent root or a discoloured tooth surface.

Orthodontic treatment can help to hasten eruption of the adult tooth and move it into position. Nothing much can be done about the bent root. The discoloured tooth surface can be corrected with either a composite (white-coloured) restoration or a veneer ("porcelain shell").

Is it normal for the baby teeth to be widely spaced?

Baby teeth are generally smaller in size compared to the adult teeth. Moreover, as a child grows, the jaws will increase in size too. In fact, there is less tendency for the adult teeth to be crowded if there are spaces amongst the baby teeth. This is because the spaces will accommodate the larger erupting adult teeth.

If there is a missing baby tooth, does it mean that the related adult tooth is absent as well?

Absence of a baby tooth does not necessarily mean absence of the related adult tooth and vice versa. If the adult tooth is not erupted at the scheduled time, an X-ray will help to tell its presence or absence. When a diastema (gap) is developed as a result of a missing tooth, it can be easily closed with orthodontic treatment.

I'm worried for my child's teeth development because he or she does not like to drink milk. What can I do to encourage him to drink more milk?

Calcium in milk is good for the development of healthy teeth and bones. Thankfully, we do not have to depend on milk alone for an adequate intake of calcium. Hence, you do not have to force milk down your child's throat if he or she finds it unpalatable. Milo, soya milk and yoghurt drinks are good replacement for milk. It is important to supplement your child with calcium-rich foods too. Cheese, nuts, green vegetables, tofu and fish are some examples.

The absorption of calcium is lowered with a high sugar intake, so remember to keep the sugary food to the minimum. To increase the absorption of calcium, make sure your child has sufficient intake of zinc, Vitamins C and D. Zinc can be found in chicken, butter, mushrooms and pineapples. Vitamin C can be found in most fruits and vegetables, while Vitamin D can be found in fish, eggs and cheese. Vitamin D can also be produced in the body when our skin is exposed to the ultra-violet light from the sun, so have some fun with your kid outdoor!



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