

After-Hours Dental Care Guide

How to identify and manage dental issues outside of regular office hours

1. Life-Threatening Medical Emergencies: Call 911

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, do not wait for a return call. **Dial 911 or proceed to the nearest emergency room immediately:**

- Severe facial swelling (especially if it is approaching the eye or neck)
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing
- Uncontrolled, continuous bleeding

2. True Dental Emergencies: Call Our After-Hours Line

If you are a current patient experiencing a severe dental crisis, please call our after-hours emergency line at **910-939-0991**. The dentist on-call should be contacted for:

- **Severe, Unmanageable Pain:** Pain that is severe, throbbing, and *cannot* be managed with over-the-counter pain medication (such as Tylenol and Ibuprofen taken together or alternately, as directed).
- **Trauma / Knocked-Out Tooth:** If a permanent tooth has been knocked out, gently rinse it without scrubbing the root, attempt to place it back in the socket, or store it in a container of cold milk. Call immediately.
- **Significant Swelling:** Localized swelling of the gums, jaw, or cheek that is rapidly worsening.

Please Note: Due to potential travel or limited cell service, calls to the emergency line will be returned as soon as possible. Please leave a detailed voicemail. If your condition worsens while waiting for a return call, please proceed to the nearest urgent care or emergency room.

3. Non-Urgent Dental Issues: At-Home Management

Many common dental problems can be safely managed at home until the office reopens. If you experience any of the following, please leave a voicemail on our main office line. We will review your message and contact you on the next business day.

Chipped or Broken Tooth (Without Severe Pain)

If the tooth is not causing severe, debilitating pain:

- Rinse your mouth gently with warm water.
- Apply a cold compress to the outside of your face if there is minor lip or cheek swelling from the injury.
- Avoid chewing on the side of the broken tooth.
- Take over-the-counter pain relievers if you feel mild discomfort.
- Apply a desensitizing toothpaste (such as Sensodyne) directly to the exposed area with your finger 2-3 times a day to keep it clean and reduce sensitivity.

Lost Crown or Filling

While a lost crown or filling can be sensitive, it is rarely a true emergency:

- Keep the area clean by brushing gently and rinsing with water.
 - If the tooth is sensitive to air or temperature, you can apply a small amount of over-the-counter dental cement (available at most pharmacies) or even a dab of toothpaste to the inside of the crown and gently slip it back over the tooth. Do **not** use superglue.
 - Avoid eating hard or sticky foods, and chew on the opposite side of your mouth.
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Sore Gums or Mild Toothache

For a dull ache or gum tenderness:

- Thoroughly clean the area. Floss gently around the sore tooth to dislodge any trapped food or debris.
- Rinse vigorously with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water).
- Manage discomfort with over-the-counter pain medication, such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Advil/Motrin (ibuprofen), according to the package directions. Never put aspirin directly on the gums.

E. Hunter Pierce DMD PA

Wilmington, NC

Please leave a message on our main line for all non-urgent scheduling, billing, or clinical inquiries.