Mouth Injury, Generic

Mouth injuries often look much worse than they really are. Today it appears that no further treatment will be necessary for this injury. Often a cut which appears large and seems to gape open will heal just fine without further care. Small cuts and scrapes inside the mouth heal in 3 or 4 days. Infections of mouth injuries which require antibiotics are uncommon.

Should this ever happen again, here are some general directions to follow:
Many of the cuts and injuries inside the mouth bleed a lot because there is a very good supply to this area. Often times these stop bleeding shortly and then you can determine if the injury needs medical care. Some common mouth injuries are:

- A loss of teeth or *fractures* (broken teeth).
- Bites on the inside of the cheeks caused accidentally while eating.
- Cuts and bruises of the upper lip from falls.
- A tear of the piece of tissue connecting the upper lip to the gum (*frenulum*) is very common and usually does not need repair.
- Cuts of the lower lip are often caused by catching it between the teeth during falls. These usually are not through and through injuries which need stitches.
- More serious mouth injuries are those to the tonsil, soft palate, or back of the throat (as from falling with a pencil in the mouth).

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If a tooth or teeth injuries are present, make an appointment to see your dentist. If baby teeth are knocked out you can ask your dentist if further treatment is needed now. If permanent teeth are knocked out, they should be put into a glass of cold milk and kept until they can be immediately re-implanted if that care is available. **This should be done as soon as possible**.
- Cold drinks or popsicles will help keep swelling down and lessen discomfort.
- After one day, warm salt water gargles using one half teaspoon of salt into 8 ounces of warm water will be helpful. Cuts in the mouth often look very grey or whitish and infected and that is because they are. The mouth is full of bacteria but injuries heal very well. Cuts that look quite bad cannot be noticed after a week or so.
- For bleeding of the inner lip or tissue that connects it to the gum, press the bleeding site against the teeth or jaw for 10 minutes.
- Once bleeding from inside the lip stops, do not pull the lip out again to look at it or the bleeding will start again.
- For bleeding from the tongue, squeeze or press the bleeding site with a sterile gauze or piece of clean cloth for 10 minutes.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. Do not take aspirin as this makes your blood “thinner” (it does not clot as easily) and you will be more likely to bleed.
- Eat a soft diet until healing is complete.
- Avoid any salty or citrus foods that might sting. Rinse the wound with warm water immediately after meals.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Pain becomes severe.
- Area looks infected (mainly increasing pain or swelling after 48 hours)
- Fever occurs.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is a large amount of bleeding that cannot be stopped.
- There seems to be a serious injury

- Minor bleeding that will not stop after 10 minutes of direct pressure.
- There are deep or wide cuts that may need stitches
- There are cuts through the border of the lip where it meets the skin. These are always repaired because the scar is more noticeable when these heal if the borders do not match up.
- There is severe pain.
- There is an inability to swallow or an onset of drooling.
- There is an injury to the back of the throat, tonsil, or soft palate.
- The mouth looks infected (fever, inflammation), increasing pain or increased swelling.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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