Tongue Laceration

Most tongue *lacerations* (cuts) only go part of the way through the tongue. This type of injury generally does not need stitches. More serious injuries penetrate the tongue deeper and may need stitches and follow-up.

Over the next 1-2 days, you will see that the wound edges will appear gray in color. The edges may appear ragged and slightly spread apart. Because of all the normal germs (*bacteria*) in the mouth, these wounds are infected. This is **not** an infection that needs medication (*antibiotics*). Most cuts heal with no problems despite their appearance.

Many tongue lacerations occur at the same time as injuries to teeth. If this has happened, your caregiver will give you additional follow-up instructions.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Cover an ice cube in a thin cloth and hold directly on the cut for 1-3 minutes at a time, six to ten times per day. Do this for one day after the cut occurred. This can help reduce pain and swelling.
- After the first day, rinse the mouth with a warm salt-water wash four times per day, or as your caregiver instructs.
- If there are no injuries to your teeth, continue oral hygiene and gentle brushing. **Do not** brush loose or broken teeth or teeth that have been put back into normal position by your caregiver.
- Large or complex cuts may require antibiotics to prevent infection.
- **Do not** eat or drink hot food or beverages while your mouth is still numb if Novocaine was used.
- **Do not** eat hard foods (such as apples) or chewy foods (such as broiled meat) until your caregiver advises you otherwise.
- If your caregiver used stitches to repair the cut, do not pull or chew them. If you do this, they will gradually loosen and may become untied.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is swelling or increasing pain in the wound or in other parts of your mouth or face.
- Pus is coming from the wound. Some drainage in the mouth is natural.
- You develop an unexplained fever above 102º F (38.9º C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- The wound breaks open (edges not staying together) after stitches have been removed.
- Bleeding develops which does not stop by applying pressure.
- You develop any problem with your breathing.

YOU MIGHT NEED A TETANUS SHOT NOW IF:

- You have no idea when you had the last one.
- You have never had a tetanus shot before.
- Your cut had dirt in it.

If you need a tetanus shot, ***and you decide not to get one***, there is a rare chance of getting tetanus. Sickness from tetanus can be serious. *If you got a tetanus shot, your arm may swell, get red and warm to the touch at the shot site. This is common and not a problem.*

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