A knocked out tooth...

As I mentioned last week, I broke my two front teeth when I was a kid. I had a face to face meeting with a rather unforgiving hardwood basketball court. Despite what you might think, that had nothing to do with me becoming a dentist. As a matter of fact, the multiple dental visits that ensued would shy most people from the career. Luckily, our family dentist was a good friend.

I was lucky in that I broke the edges off of my front teeth...as opposed to actually knocking them out or *avulsing* them. Kids go through a stage (usually from seven to eleven years of age) when their adult teeth are coming in and the roots have yet to fully form. Before political correctness, this was referred to as the “ugly duckling” stage because the front teeth tend to be flared out and a little goofy looking. This flaring makes the teeth more susceptible to being injured or knocked out.

Last week I discussed what to do in case a tooth breaks. I’d like to follow that up this week with what to do when a tooth is knocked out. For you parents out there, please cut this article out and put it in the “junk” drawer in case you ever need a reference. Here’s what to do in the case of an avulsed tooth:

- *Don’t panic* – I know this doesn’t have to be repeated, but it’s a good reminder. When things are going fast, go slow.

- *Calm your child* – From the way our house has been lately, I know firsthand that you can’t think with one or multiple screaming kids. Do what it takes to calm and relax your kid.

- *Find the tooth* – Another obvious action, but I once had a parent tell me that the dog ate their kid’s tooth. I couldn’t make that up. I resisted the temptation to suggest that they return to my office with a bag of doggie doo in a couple of days.

- *Gently clean the tooth* – There are important living cells around the tooth that you do not want to damage. Quickly and gently rinse the tooth under a clean water source...faucet, bottled water, etc.

- *Transport the child and the tooth to your dentist* – It is very important that the tooth does not dry out, but you cannot put it in regular water. The best option is to have your child put it in their cheek if they are old enough and calm enough not to chew or swallow it. Milk is your other option.

- *Get help* – The quicker that tooth can be put back in place the better. See your dentist right away.

    It is truly my hope that none of you ever need this, but I hope it helps if you do. Until next time, keep smiling.

- Questions or comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish at ParrishDental@aol.com.