Is This a Dental Emergency? Broken Tooth, Lost Crown, Toothache and Swelling — What to Do Before You Reach Us (Aurora, IL)

Meta description: Broken tooth? Lost crown? Swelling that won't quit? Here's how to tell a true dental emergency from a "call tomorrow" problem — and exactly what to do first — from an emergency dentist in Aurora, IL. (159 chars)

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Is This a Dental Emergency? How to Tell — and What to Do First

It's 8:40 on a Tuesday night. You bit down on something and heard a crack. Or your crown came off with a piece of caramel. Or the dull ache you've been ignoring for a week has become a throb that won't let you sleep, and now your cheek looks puffy.

The question running through your head is always the same: *is this an emergency, or can it wait until morning?*

At Smiles of Aurora, we take that call every week from patients across Aurora, North Aurora, Montgomery, Oswego, and the rest of the Fox Valley. This guide is the answer we give on the phone — organized by symptom, so you can find your situation fast and know exactly what to do in the next 15 minutes.

If you can't breathe or swallow normally, or you have facial swelling spreading toward your eye or neck with a fever, stop reading and go to the nearest emergency room. Those are medical emergencies first and dental emergencies second.

For everything else, keep reading — and save this number: **630-349-5889**. We see same-day dental emergencies during our office hours, which run as early as 7am and as late as 7pm depending on the day.

The Quick Answer: Three Categories

Nearly every dental problem falls into one of three buckets.

Go now (same day, or ER if we're closed): facial swelling with fever, uncontrolled bleeding, a knocked-out permanent tooth, a tooth pushed out of position, or a fracture that exposes pink or bleeding tissue inside the tooth.

Call us today, be seen within 24–48 hours: a lost crown or filling, a chipped or cracked tooth without severe pain, a toothache you can manage with over-the-counter medication, a broken denture or partial, or a loose bracket or wire.

Schedule a regular appointment: mild sensitivity, a small chip with no pain, a dull ache that comes only with cold and fades in seconds, or bleeding gums when you brush.

The sections below cover the situations we hear about most.

Broken, Chipped, or Cracked Tooth

How urgent is it? It depends on what you see and feel.

- **A small chip with no pain:** not an emergency. Save any fragment in milk or saliva, avoid chewing on that side, and call us for an appointment this week.
- **A larger break with sharp pain, or a break that shows a pink or red spot in the middle of the tooth:** that's the pulp — the nerve — and it's exposed. Call us the same day. An exposed pulp becomes infected quickly, and the difference between a crown and a root canal is often measured in days.
- **A crack you can't see but you get a sharp jolt when you bite and release:** this is often cracked tooth syndrome. Not a tonight emergency, but don't wait weeks either. Cracks propagate under chewing load.

What to do right now: rinse with warm water, apply a cold compress to the outside of your cheek in 15-minute intervals to limit swelling, and cover any sharp edge with sugar-free gum or dental wax so it doesn't shred your tongue. Take ibuprofen or acetaminophen as directed on the label if you need it.

Lost Crown or Filling

How urgent is it? Usually a "call today, seen in a day or two" problem — not a middle-of-the-night one. The exception is if the exposed tooth is extremely sensitive or you can see it's broken underneath.

What to do right now:

1. Find the crown and keep it. Rinse it and put it in a small bag. We can often re-cement the original, which saves you the cost of a new one.
2. Look inside the crown. If the tooth structure is still inside it (the crown is filled with what looks like tooth), the tooth may have fractured — call us sooner.
3. If the tooth is sensitive, you can buy temporary dental cement at any pharmacy and seat the crown yourself as a short-term measure. Clean the inside of the crown, dry the tooth, apply a thin layer, seat it, and bite gently. **Never use super glue** — it damages the tooth and the crown and makes the permanent fix harder.
4. Avoid chewing on that side and skip anything sticky or very hot or cold.

A lost filling is handled the same way. Temporary filling material from the pharmacy will get you comfortably to your appointment.

Toothache

Toothaches have a wide range, from "annoying" to "I'd rather be anywhere else." The severity and pattern tell us what's likely happening.

- **Brief sensitivity to cold that disappears in a few seconds:** typically a small cavity, a worn spot, or exposed root. Regular appointment.
- **Pain that lingers 30 seconds or more after cold or heat, or wakes you up at night:** the nerve is likely inflamed and may be dying. Same-day or next-day appointment — this is the stage where a root canal saves the tooth. Our post on root canal warning signs walks through this in detail.
- **Throbbing pain with pressure, a bad taste, or a bump on the gum near the tooth:** likely an abscess. Same day.

What to do right now: rinse with warm salt water, floss gently around the tooth to remove any trapped food (you'd be surprised how often that's the whole problem), and take ibuprofen and acetaminophen as directed. **Do not put aspirin directly on the gum** — it burns the tissue and doesn't help the tooth. Keep your head elevated when you lie down; blood flow to the head increases the throb.

Swelling, Abscess, or Infection

This is the category where waiting is most dangerous. A tooth abscess is a pocket of infection, and infections in the head and neck have very short routes to places you don't want them to go.

Go to the ER — not to us — if you have: swelling that is spreading toward your eye, under your jaw, or down your neck; difficulty swallowing or opening your mouth; fever with chills; or a feeling that your throat is tightening. These are signs the infection is moving into the deeper spaces of the face and neck, and you may need IV antibiotics.

Call us the same day if you have: localized swelling around one tooth, a pimple-like bump on the gum, a bad taste or drainage, or a tooth that feels "tall" when you bite.

What to do right now: cold compress on the outside of the face, warm salt water rinses, and over-the-counter pain relief as directed. Do not try to pop or drain anything yourself. An abscess does not resolve on its own — even when the pain stops. Pain that suddenly disappears often means the nerve has died, not that the infection has.

The American Dental Association's consumer site has a plain-language summary of dental emergencies and first-aid steps that's worth bookmarking on your phone.

Knocked-Out or Displaced Tooth

If a permanent tooth is completely knocked out, you have about 30 minutes for the best chance of saving it. We wrote a dedicated step-by-step guide: Knocked-Out Tooth? 5 Steps in the First 30 Minutes. The short version: pick it up by the crown, don't scrub it, reinsert it if you can or put it in milk, and call **630-349-5889** on your way in.

If a tooth is pushed sideways, pushed up into the gum, or is suddenly loose after a blow, don't try to move it yourself. Call us immediately. Repositioning and splinting within a few hours makes a real difference in whether the tooth survives.

Bleeding That Won't Stop

Some bleeding after an extraction or an injury is normal. Bleeding that soaks through gauze for more than 20–30 minutes of firm, continuous pressure is not.

What to do right now: fold clean gauze or a damp black tea bag (the tannins help clotting), place it directly on the site, and bite down firmly without checking for 20 minutes straight. Don't rinse, spit, or use a straw. If it's still bleeding heavily after two rounds of this, call us — or go to the ER if you're on blood thinners or the bleeding is heavy.

Broken Dentures, Partials, Aligners, or Braces

These aren't medical emergencies, but they can make eating, speaking, or continuing treatment impossible.

- **Broken denture or partial:** don't use household glue. Bring all the pieces to us; many repairs are same-day.
- **Cracked or lost Invisalign aligner:** move to your next tray if the fit is comfortable, or go back to the previous one so your teeth don't shift, and message our clear aligner team. Dr. Charlie Malzenski leads all aligner therapy at Smiles of Aurora and monitors cases virtually between visits, so we can usually give you direction the same day.
- **Poking wire or loose bracket:** cover it with orthodontic wax and call for an adjustment.

Why Waiting Costs More

We say this to every patient who apologizes for "bothering us" with an emergency call: the small problem is always the cheaper problem.

A chipped tooth handled this week is a bonding or a crown. The same tooth after the pulp gets infected is a root canal *and* a crown. The same tooth after the infection reaches the bone may be an extraction and an implant. Our post on what happens when you wait too long to replace a missing tooth covers the far end of that road.

You'll never be lectured for calling. You will be seen.

What to Expect When You Call

When you call **630-349-5889** with an emergency during business hours, here's what happens:

1. Our team asks a few quick questions about your symptoms so we know what to prepare.
2. We give you a same-day appointment time and any instructions for the drive in.
3. On arrival, we take the X-rays we need, get you comfortable, and address the pain first.

4. We explain the definitive fix, the cost, and your options — including CareCredit, Cherry, and in-house financing if you're uninsured.

If you reach us after hours, our voicemail gives you instructions. For swelling with fever, trouble swallowing, or heavy bleeding, go to the ER and call us first thing the next morning.

We serve patients across Aurora (60502, 60503, 60504, 60505, 60506), North Aurora (60542), Montgomery and Boulder Hill (60538), Sugar Grove (60554), Oswego (60543), Yorkville (60560), Batavia (60510), Plano (60545), Sandwich (60548), Hinckley (60520), Campton Hills (60175, 60183), and the surrounding Kane, Kendall, and DeKalb County communities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Should I go to the ER or the dentist for a toothache? A: For pain alone, the dentist. Emergency rooms can prescribe antibiotics and pain medication but generally cannot treat the tooth itself — you'll be sent to a dentist anyway. Go to the ER for spreading facial swelling, fever, trouble breathing or swallowing, or uncontrolled bleeding.

Q: My tooth stopped hurting on its own. Am I okay? A: Not necessarily. Sudden relief after days of severe pain often means the nerve has died. The infection is still there and will typically return as swelling. Please still come in.

Q: Can I re-glue my own crown? A: With pharmacy temporary dental cement, yes — as a short-term measure until we can see you. Never with super glue or any household adhesive.

Q: Do you see emergency patients who have never been to your office? A: Yes. New patients with emergencies are seen the same day during our office hours. Bring your ID, insurance card if you have one, and a list of medications.

Q: Will insurance cover an emergency visit? A: Most plans cover an emergency exam and X-rays, and at least part of the treatment. We verify benefits when you call and give you a written estimate before treatment. Uninsured patients can use CareCredit, Cherry, or our in-house payment options.

Save the Number Before You Need It

The best time to decide whether something is an emergency is not while you're in pain. Save **630-349-5889** in your phone as "Emergency Dentist" today.

When something happens, **call 630-349-5889 or schedule online**. We'll tell you what to do on the way in, we'll see you the same day, and we'll fix the problem before it becomes a bigger one.

Writer's Notes (not for publication)

Word count: ~1,900 words (publication content).

Outside link (1): ADA MouthHealthy — Dental Emergencies (https://www.mouthhealthy.org/all-topics-a-z/dental-emergencies). Verify URL resolves before publishing.

Internal links to add when published: - Knocked-Out Tooth? 5 Steps in the First 30 Minutes (E28) - Root Canal Symptoms: 8 Warning Signs You Shouldn't Ignore (E24) - What Happens If You Wait Too Long to Replace a Missing Tooth? (E20) - How to Pay for Dental Work Without Insurance (E26) - Service page: /emergency-dental-care-aurora-il/

Featured image direction: Evening kitchen or living-room setting, adult holding one side of the jaw with phone in the other hand — calm, not graphic. Alternate: a clean three-column "Go now / Call today / Schedule" graphic that doubles as a shareable social asset.

Schema markup: FAQPage schema. Article schema with author = Smiles of Aurora. Consider MedicalWebPage.

Lead magnet idea: "Dental Emergency Triage Card" — one-page PDF of the three-category table with the tracking number, for fridge/wallet.