

(not the root). If the root has dirt on it, gently rinse it in milk - but whatever you do, don't clean it vigorously. Replace the tooth in the socket immediately and see a dentist immediately. If you can't replace the tooth in its socket, wrap it gently in plastic wrap or place in a small container of milk and get to a dentist quickly.

Next week (August 2-8) is Dental Health Week.

Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.



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## How to save money on dental bills

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**NSW HEALTH**  
DEPARTMENT

## **How to save money on dental bills**

The cost of regular check ups at the dentist is a good investment in the health of your mouth. But taking care of teeth at home can mean fewer visits to the dentist for preventable problems like tooth decay and gum disease.

**Spend more time brushing and flossing - and less time at the dentist.** A few seconds brushing with toothpaste freshens your mouth - but it's not enough to prevent problems. The main reason adults lose teeth is because their gums become infected. If infection spreads to the bones which hold the teeth in place, teeth may become loose and eventually drop out. Gum infection is caused by build-up of an invisible, sticky substance called plaque.

But careful brushing and flossing removes plaque - including the bacteria in plaque which causes tooth decay. Use a soft brush with a small head, replace it when bristles start looking worn (about every six weeks), and use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste. Brush teeth after breakfast and before bed, moving the brush in tiny circles over each tooth or gently up and down. Brush the inside surfaces of teeth too. Use dental floss or dental tape daily to clean between the teeth where a brush can't reach.

What if your gums bleed? It means they're inflamed and at risk of becoming infected. Keep brushing and ask your dentist for advice. Never share your toothbrush - decay-causing bacteria can be passed from one person to another.

**Help children brush their teeth.** Children usually need help with brushing until they're about seven or eight, and need help with flossing until they're about ten. Make sure they know how to brush correctly, using only a small amount of fluoride

toothpaste. (Children under the age of six should use a low-dose fluoride toothpaste). Disclosing tablets, available from chemists, can help parents and children see where plaque has been left behind on teeth. It's okay to use anti-plaque mouthwashes as long as you realise they're no substitute for careful brushing and flossing.

**Eat tooth-friendly food.** Some snacks and drinks consumed regularly between meals can damage teeth. These include sweet, sticky foods, soft drinks, sports drinks and even fruit juice. Try to discourage children from having these foods too often. Good foods for adults and children in between meals include fruit and low fat dairy products like milk, cheese and yoghurt (but give full fat dairy products to children aged five and under). Dairy foods contain a special protein which can help prevent decay. Drink water between meals - it contains fluoride which helps make teeth strong.

**Chew sugar-free gum.** Chewing this gum for up to 20 minutes after eating helps fight tooth decay. This is because chewing gum makes your mouth produce more saliva - and saliva helps protect against decay. But it's important to make sure the gum says *sugar-free* on the label. It helps wash away food particles after eating and helps protect against plaque.

**Consider a mouthguard if you play sport.** Mouthguards can reduce the risk of dental injuries (which can be expensive to fix), as well as concussion in contact sports such as football and basketball. If you or your children need a mouthguard it's best to get one specially made at the dentist to make sure it fits correctly, rather than buy one at the chemist.

**Know how to save a tooth (and make sure children do too).** If a tooth is knocked out in an accident, prompt action may save it. First find the tooth, handle it carefully by the crown