

## Maintaining Space: When Your Child Accidentally Knocks Out a Tooth

It's always exciting when a child loses a baby tooth, but what happens when they accidentally knock it out too early, or they lose it due to a cavity? Since baby teeth are necessary to keep space for permanent teeth, they could experience dental issues in the future if they are lost prematurely.

When a tooth is missing, the [other teeth can shift to fill the gap](#). This can cause the permanent teeth to grow in crooked and crowded since there's little space left for them, which [can affect your child's speech and ability to chew](#). The solution is space maintainers, and they are typically only needed for the "back" teeth.

Space maintainers are [devices that fill the space left by a tooth](#). These are custom to fit your child's mouth to keep the spacing between other primary teeth in place. They can be a band or a temporary crown attached to one side of the open space with a loop or bar contacting the tooth on the other side.

Depending on the age of your child, he or she may have the space maintainer for years, since some permanent teeth don't emerge until [the age of 14](#). Here are [four guidelines](#) for caring for space maintainers:

- Children should not eat sticky candy or chew gum.
- Make sure children don't tug, push or play with space maintainers with their fingers or tongue.
- Keep the appliance clean by helping children brush and floss regularly.
- Make sure children visit their dentist twice a year.

This year, with your State of Iowa dental plan, space maintainers are now considered a Diagnostic and Preventive Service. This means the coinsurance for your child, up to age 14, to receive a space maintainer is 0%, compared to previously when it was 20% as a Routine and Restorative Service.

For more tips on children's oral health, visit the [Delta Dental of Iowa blog](#).