

Mouthguards

What is a mouthguard?

A mouthguard is a flexible appliance made out of plastic that is worn in athletic and recreational activities to protect teeth from trauma.

Why should I wear a mouthguard?

To protect your mouth from injuries. The dental profession unanimously supports the use of mouthguards in a variety of sports activities. More than 200,000 injuries to the mouth and jaw occur each year.

Do mouthguards prevent injuries?

A mouthguard can prevent serious injuries such as concussions, cerebral hemorrhages, incidents of unconsciousness, jaw fractures and neck injuries by helping to avoid situations where the lower jaw gets jammed into the upper jaw. Mouthguards are effective in moving soft tissue in the oral cavity away from the teeth, preventing laceration and bruising of the lips and cheeks, especially for those who wear orthodontic appliances.

In what sports should I wear a mouthguard?

Anytime there is a strong chance for contact with other participants or hard surfaces, it is advisable to wear a mouthguard. Players who participate in basketball, softball, wrestling, soccer, lacrosse, rugby, in-line skating, and martial arts as well as recreational sports such as skateboarding and bicycling should wear mouthguards while competing.

Currently, five sports at the amateur level require mouthguards during practice and competition: boxing, football, ice hockey, men's lacrosse and women's field hockey.

Why don't kids wear mouthguards?

Parents are sometimes uninformed about the level of contact and potential for serious dental injuries involved with sports in which the child participates. Some, though not all schools, reinforce the health advantage of mouthguards for their contact sports. Cost may be another consideration, although mouthguards come in a variety of price ranges.

What are the different types of mouthguards?

Stock mouthguard: The lowest cost option is a stock item, which offers the least protection because the fit adjustment is limited. It may interfere with speech and breathing because this mouthguard requires that the jaw be closed to hold it in place. A stock mouthguard is not considered acceptable as a facial protective device.

Mouth-formed protectors: These mouthguards come as a shell-liner and "boil-and-bite" product. The shell is lined with acrylic or rubber. When placed in an athlete's mouth, the protector's lining material molds to the teeth and is allowed to set. The lining of the "boil-and-bite" mouthguard is immersed in boiling water for 10-45 seconds, transferred to cold water and then adapted to the teeth. The "boil-and-bite" mouthguard is used by more than 90 percent of athletes who use mouthguards. While they are less expensive than custom-made guards, the fit is not as good and they do not last as long.

Custom-made mouth protectors: The best choice is a mouthguard custom-made by your dentist. It offers the best protection, fit and comfort level because it is made from a cast to fit your teeth.

How should I care for a mouthguard?

- Clean your mouthguard by washing it with soap and warm (not hot) water.
- Before storing, soak your mouthguard in mouthwash.
- Keep your mouthguard in a well-ventilated plastic storage box when not in use. Make sure the box has several holes so the mouthguard will dry.
- Heat is bad for mouthguards, so don't leave it in direct sunlight or in a closed automobile.
- Don't bend your mouthguard when storing.
- Don't handle or wear someone else's mouthguard.
- Call your dentist who made the mouthguard if there are any problems.

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