

# Sports and Activities

Mouthguards aren't just for adults!

**Remember to add a mouthguard for each child to your list of school supplies. Protecting your child's head, jaw and teeth, even for seemingly non-contact sports, is very important.**

**"Mouthguards not only protect the teeth," says Dr. Ian McConnachie, a pediatric dentist and former president of the Ontario Dental Association. "They may also prevent concussions and other serious injuries by helping to avoid situations where the lower jaw and teeth are forced up against the upper teeth and jaw."**

**Sports Canada reports that overall, 69 percent of Canadian youth participate in organized sport. In any sport, whether it's full-contact hockey or a friendly game of racquetball, a little preparation can prevent costly and sometimes painful mistakes later on!**



## Who should wear a mouthguard?

Anyone playing contact sports or engaging in aggressive activities should wear a mouthguard.

Any sport with a strong chance for contact with other participants or hard surfaces requires mouth protection. Players who participate in basketball, baseball, soccer, wrestling, squash, racquetball, lacrosse, rugby, in-line skating and martial arts, or even recreational sports such as skateboarding and bicycling, should wear mouthguards when practising or competing.

Many athletes resist wearing a mouthguard because of bulkiness and poor fit. Custom-made mouthguards are the most comfortable, non-bulky and form-fitting. This leads to increased use and fewer injuries.

## What are the factors that affect the fit of a mouthguard?

"A dentist will consider a number of factors when fitting a patient for a mouthguard," says Dr. McConnachie. "Size of mouth, bite, type of sport played and whether or not the patient wears braces or other appliances are all important considerations. Each patient's very specific needs must be addressed for maximum comfort and protection."

## Care for your mouthguard so it cares for you!

Caring for your mouthguard will help it take care of your teeth longer. Take a few moments to:

- Rinse your mouthguard under cold water after each use and air-dry.
- Occasionally clean it with mild soap and water or mouthwash.

- Store your mouthguard in a plastic container when not in use to avoid damage due to excessive heat and cold.
- Wear your mouthguard properly. Do not cut or alter it and do not chew on it.
- Check your mouthguard regularly and let your dentist know if it shows any signs of wear, or has any tears or cracks that may weaken it. If the bite has changed and the mouthguard no longer fits well, it can sometimes be adjusted by the dentist

## Types of Mouthguards

### Custom-Made

The dentist takes an impression of the patient's mouth and the mouthguard is fabricated from a cast model of the patient's teeth. This method provides the best fit, protection and comfort. The custom-made mouthguard is most durable, can be modified for specific sports and patient-need and does not interfere with speech or breathing.

### Boil and Bite or Mouth-Formed

This type of mouthguard requires heating in warm water and then the user bites into the warm plastic. Because it is not vacuum-fitted onto a model of the patient's teeth, the fit is not as precise. The heating process will also reduce the longevity of the mouthguard. Discuss this option with your dentist.

### Stock or Ready-Made

Made of rubber or polyvinyl, the ready-made mouthguard is a generic fit with limited comfort, protection and durability. It is often bulky and loose-fitting and may interfere with breathing and speech.

## Do's and Don'ts of Tooth Injuries

Prevention isn't always fool-proof, so if you play any sports, learn what to do in case of a mouth injury. Here are some Do's and Don'ts:

- DO make sure that you go to the dentist as quickly as possible after an injury to the teeth and/or jaw has occurred. Time is critical to the chances of saving the tooth/teeth.
- DO make sure you receive prompt medical treatment in the case of injury sustained to the jaw where there was a loss of consciousness, no matter how brief the loss of consciousness was.
- DON'T place the lost or broken tooth/teeth in tissue paper or gauze while on the way to the dentist.
- DO store the dislodged tooth/teeth in cold milk or in sterile saline solution on your way to the dentist. Ideally, ask your dentist about commercially available tooth injury kits.
- DON'T assume that non-contact sports can't cause mouth injuries.

