

Mouthguards and Dento-Facial Trauma

Mouthguards have been proven to greatly reduce the number and severity of mouth injuries in active sports. Seeing a perfect mouth of natural teeth damaged and broken from a sports injury is tragic considering accidents of this nature are simple to prevent. While most players and parents will acknowledge that prevention is better than cure, this is not always translated into action.

“Dental injuries are the commonest type of facial injury sustained during participation in sports, and the majority are preventable if an individually fitted mouthguard is worn.”

-National Health and Medical Research Council, November 1989.



Why Wear A Mouthguard?

The individually fitted mouthguard is an invaluable item for player protection. A properly fitted mouthguard provides protection by:

1. Decreasing the risk of injury to front teeth, especially upper front teeth. Injuries to upper front teeth have been shown to be reduced by 90% when a mouthguard is worn.
2. Prevent lacerations to jaws, lips and cheeks from the sharp edges of teeth.
3. Decrease the risk of serious injury to back teeth of both jaws when the mouth is forcibly shut by a blow.

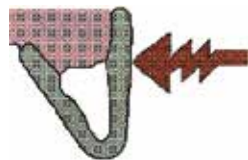
4. Reduce the risk of jaw fracture especially in the area of the jaw joint.
5. Reduce the risk of concussion by absorbing the shock of the blow to the jaw. The plastic mouthguard absorbs and disperses the energy of a blow.

Types Of Mouthguard

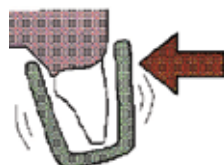
There are three types of mouthguard available:

1. Individually fitted mouthguard.
2. Semi-adaptable mouthguard. Sold over the counter, and adaptable in mouth after warming.
3. Standard mouthguard. Sold ready-made over the counter.

Custom fitted or dentist made mouthguards are firm fitting and will remain in place when an injury occurs.



Prefabricated mouthguards such as those from a chemist fit poorly and are uncomfortable to wear. Often they are not worn at all. These mouthguards are easily dislodged by an impact. They provide little or no protection. These mouthguards can be dislodged and inhaled by the unconscious patient. This does not happen with custom fitted mouthguards.



How Much Do Mouthguards Cost?

Costs should be weighed against the risk of injury and the expense of dental work. The price of a fitted mouthguard is equivalent to the cost of a minor dental procedure. It provides substantial protection against major dental injury. Typically, a basic custom fitted mouthguard will range in price from \$105. Mouthguards are rebatable from health insurance companies.

Cautions

- A loose fitting mouthguard that must be held in place by clenching is unsatisfactory.
- A mouthguard should have sufficient retention to prevent dislodgement by an impacting force.
- An ill-fitting mouthguard has the potential to cause injury.
- There is normally a period of adjustment before the wearer becomes accustomed to a new mouthguard.
- A mouthguard should always be worn during training sessions.
- Mouthguards can be made to allow for missing and erupting teeth and to be worn over orthodontic wires.

How Are They Made?

Impressions of the mouth are taken by the dentist, from which a model is made. A flexible plastic material is moulded over the model and then put into a pressurised container. The mouthguard will fit the mouth exactly and be comfortable to wear. It is advisable to train wearing the mouthguard so the wearer becomes used to wearing it.

Accidents

If a tooth is knocked out, retrieve the tooth, rinse it in milk and place it back in the mouth. Do not rinse the tooth with water. Alternatively wrap the tooth in gladwrap to prevent it drying out. Place tin foil around the tooth to keep it in place or hold it with your finger. The quicker the tooth is put back in place, the more chance it has of survival. Go immediately to your dentist. Do not put baby teeth back in place, it may damage the permanent tooth growing underneath. In the event of an emergency our clinic is available 24 hours a day.