



THE SECRET OF PREVENTING SPORTS INJURIES

The National Youth Sports Foundation estimates that more than 5 million teeth will be knocked out in sporting activities this year. These traumas to the mouth will happen to children, high school and college level athletes. In fact, dental injuries are the most common type of head injury sustained during sports participation. Most people think that football and hockey are the most injury plagued sports, but actually basketball is the number one sport for mouth injuries. According to the American Dental Association, more than 200,000 of these mouth injuries can be prevented in this country by wearing sports mouth guards.

The benefits of sports mouth guard protection have been well documented. In 1995 Dr. Raymond Flander's study on the high incidence of mouth injuries showed that in football, where mouth guards are mandatory, only .07% of all injuries involved the teeth. Conversely, in basketball where mouth guards are not worn, 34% of all injuries to players involved the teeth! Obviously dental injuries could also be significantly reduced if children, teenagers and adults involved in the following sports wore custom fabricated mouth guards: soccer, volleyball, baseball, softball, rollerblading, skateboarding, martial arts, boxing, hockey, kickboxing and mountain biking.

Wearing mouth guards can also be cost effective. According to the Academy for Sports Dentistry, the lifetime dental rehabilitation casts can approach several thousand dollars per tooth, for the child or athlete who loses a tooth (or teeth) in a sports injury. This does not include the associated costs of hours in the dental office and the possible development of secondary problems such as gum and bone disease. The total rehabilitation costs for a single knocked-out tooth are more than 20 times the preventative cost for a custom, professional grade mouth guard. Sometimes it's not "cool" to wear mouth guards in certain sports because not many people wear them. I play a lot of softball and I'm one of only two players in the whole league that wears a mouth guard. But I tell you when I'm out there on that rugged infield playing third base and that bad hop catches me square in the chin, I'm glad I have that mouth guard protecting my teeth!

Not all mouth guards are created equal! The most common mouth guard is the stock or “boil and bite” type mouth guards, typically found in sporting goods stores. These mouth guards fit loosely and often are not comfortable and interfere with the athletes breathing and speaking ability. Also, research has shown that these mouth guards decrease in thickness as the athlete bites into place reducing its protection ability dramatically. The alternative is a custom fitted mouth guard that is thicker, provides significantly more protection, is more comfortable, and is easier to speak with. Your dentist can make you a custom fitted mouth guard by creating a custom made mold or impression of your teeth and then hand crafting your personalized mouth guard with the color of your choice. You make the call! If you’re interested in a custom fitted mouth guard for the athlete in your family, contact your dentist and make your playing days safe ones.

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