

## PATIENT'S PAGE



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### Protecting Your Smile – Frequently Asked Questions About Mouthguards

#### What is a mouthguard?

A mouthguard, or a mouth protector, is a flexible, important piece of athletic gear. When worn during athletic and recreational activities, it can protect your teeth from trauma.

#### Why should I wear a mouthguard?

Adults, teens and children should wear mouthguards. Facial and head injuries can be sustained in nearly every type of athletic or recreational activity – even non-contact sports like skateboarding and bicycling. A mouthguard can, in some cases, protect you from serious injuries such as some concussions, cerebral hemorrhages, fractures of the jaw, and some neck injuries. Mouthguards also help protect you from the most common types of injury to the mouth, cuts to the cheek and tongue, which often require oral surgery to repair. General dentists see more injuries to the mouth as a result of playing sports than from almost any other single cause.

#### How do I choose a mouthguard?

A mouthguard has to fit properly in order for it to provide the highest degree of protection. Different sports involve varying degrees of risk for injury and your mouthguard should stay in place during vigorous movement. Your dentist will help you determine the right type of mouthguard for you. There are three types of mouthguards that offer varying degrees of protection:

- Store-bought or stock – offers the least amount of protection because the fit is most limited and it interferes with speech and breathing because the jaw must be closed to hold it in place.
- “Boil and bite” or mouth-formed – offers a greater degree of protection, is lined with acrylic or rubber and, when placed in the athlete’s mouth, the lining is molded and set.
- Custom-made by a dentist – offers the greatest degree of protection. A tailor-made mouthguard created by a professional in the dentist’s office can be created to meet the specific demands of the athlete and the sport.

#### How do I care for my mouthguard?

- Clean after every use with soap and warm (not hot) water or a toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Soak in antiseptic mouthwash.
- Allow to air dry.
- Keep in a well-ventilated, plastic container when not in use.
- Do not leave in direct sunlight or allow it to get to warm when not in use.
- Do not bend your mouthguard.
- Do not allow others to handle or wear your mouthguard (and don’t handle/wear theirs!).
- Check its condition of for tears or holes before each use.
- Have your dentist check your mouthguard periodically for effectiveness.

## It Just Makes Good Sense!

**Wearing a mouthguard can prevent serious injury and serious pain. Each year this simple safety measure prevents an estimated 200,000+ oral injuries!**

### The most effective mouthguard should:

- be resilient and tear resistant
  - be comfortable
  - fit properly
- be easy to clean
- not restrict your breathing or speech