

# **Tooth Talk**

## **“Hey Doc, what type of mouthguard should my kids wear for their sports in order to protect their teeth?”**

For anybody who is involved with contact sports or activities that may involve contact with hard surfaces, wearing an athletic mouthguard is strongly advisable. A mouthguard is a flexible appliance that is worn during athletic or recreational activities in order to prevent injuries to the mouth and the face, such as broken teeth, broken jaws, cut lips, etc.

Recent dental research has shown that well-fitted mouthguards can even reduce the incidence of severe concussions or sports-related mild traumatic brain injuries. Examples of activities in which mouthguard is recommended include hockey, basketball, football, lacrosse, soccer, rugby, skateboarding, etc.



There are several types of mouthguard that one can choose from:

### 1. Stock mouthguards:

This is the least costly but it offers the least protection.

It is available over-the-counter and is a ready-made stock item which requires the user to close his/her lower jaw to hold it in place. It can interfere with speech and breathing and may cause jaw muscle soreness/pain. Generally speaking, the stock mouthguard is not regarded as an acceptable appliance for oral/facial protection.

### 2. Mouth-formed mouthguards:

The most common type of mouth-formed mouthguard is called the thermoplastic, or “boil-and-bite” mouthguard. It is softened in hot water and then placed in the mouth. The user will use his/her fingers and tongue or biting pressure to mould the mouthguard around the teeth. This type of mouthguard can provide some degree of protection but it tends to be bulky and loose-fitting.

### 3. Custom-made mouthguards:

This is the best option for injury prevention and is made by the dental professionals. A mould is taken on the user’s teeth and the mouthguard is made on the teeth model. This type of mouthguards offers the best fit, comfort, and protection.

In order to have a long-lasting mouthguard, one should:

- brush the mouthguard with a soft toothbrush and cool water after each use.
- store the mouthguard in a well-ventilated storage box.
- Don’t let your pet chew on it or it will be destroyed!
- not leave the mouthguard in direct sunlight or in a hot place or it will melt.
- bring the mouthguard to the dentist at the regular  
  recare visits so that the mouthguard can receive a thorough  
  cleaning.

If you look after the mouthguard well, it can provide you with oral and facial protection for a long time

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