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PROPERLY FITTED MOUTHGUARDS

FACT SHEET

The Ohio Dental Association advocates the use of mouthguards by youth in all school sports and recreational activities that have the potential for a contact injury. This includes activities such as bicycling , skating and roller blading and so on (see page 2).

A properly-fitted mouthguard made by the dentist is optimum; however, the best mouthguard is the one in the child's mouth during sports and contact activities.

Mouthguards provide protection from a direct injury, such as a soccer ball hit to the head, or an indirect injury such as a fall. Mouthguards are as necessary in recreational sports as they are in organized sports. The American Dental Association (ADA) reports that over two million teeth are knocked out each year from sports-related injuries, and estimates that more than 200,000 injuries are prevented each year in high school and college athletics who use mouth and/or face guards.

“Parents just need to remember to ‘slip and slide’ when it comes to protecting their children from head injuries,” says Cleveland area dentist, Dr. Matthew Messina, an ODA member and consumer oral health spokesperson for the American Dental Association. “Slipping on a helmet and padding, and sliding in a mouthguard will significantly reduce a child’s risk of mouth trauma.”

The ADA also reports that mouthguards help prevent injury to the mouth, teeth, lips, cheek and tongue - and can cushion the blow that might otherwise result in jaw fractures and/or concussion. And while a mouthguard cannot entirely prevent injury, it can minimize it substantially.

There’s an economic factor as well - the National Youth Sports Foundation for Safety reports that the cost of care for a fractured tooth is substantially higher than the cost of a custom mouthguard - replanting a tooth and follow-up dental care is approximately \$5,000, according to the foundation - and that cost will be higher for more severe accidents.

A mouthguard is a necessary piece of sports equipment/athletic gear, and should fit properly for maximum protection. There are three basic types of mouthguards: stock, which does not conform to the mouth but works well with braces; boil and bite, which forms to the shape of the user’s mouth; or custom made (properly-fitted) from a dental office or laboratory. The first two types of mouthguards are generally found at sporting goods stores.

Properly fitted, the mouthguard should not be impede speech or breathing. It should be tear resistant, comfortable and resilient. The best fit will come from a custom-made mouthguard made in a dental office or laboratory, because it is formed to the shape of the individual’s mouth and teeth.

It is recommended that boys and girls participating - both in practice and actual play - in the following sports (and any other contact/physical sport) should wear a mouthguard:

Acrobatics	Football	Martial Arts	Skiing	Volleyball
Basketball	Gymnastics	Racquetball	Skydiving	Water Polo
Boxing	Handball	Rugby	Soccer	Weightlifting
Cycling	Hockey	Shot Put	Squash	Wrestling
Discus	Lacrosse	Skateboard	Surfing	

Similarly, parents should give thought to their child's casual play and recreational activities such as rollerblading, street hockey, and other such activities in which a mouthguard can prevent serious and/or permanent injury.

Parents are urged to stress to their children the importance of wearing mouthguards - and keeping it in the mouth during the physical activity. While the youngster's natural inclination may be to not wear it, knowledge is power and the following points may drive home the importance of this vital component of athletic gear:

Smile pretty ... the family dentist can provide additional substantiation - not only on the risk of injury, but the negative cosmetic impacts to the teeth.

Loss is permanent ... parents and coaches should stress to the student athletes that broken or avulsed teeth are not like a broken bone - teeth do not heal or regrow.

For the team ... avoid official penalties of the team by a referee, especially when the mouthguard is a component of standard game gear and/or athletic equipment.

Practice makes perfect ... wearing the mouthguard during all forms of play, whether practice or actual game, makes putting the mouthguard in place second nature.

To learn more about the importance of wearing properly-fitted mouthguards, consult your dentist. Additional information is also available online at the American Dental Association website, http://www.ada.org/public/topics/mouthguards_faq.asp.