



## Mouthguards: Information for Parents

Mouthguards can help protect your child from a dental emergency. They should be worn whenever your child is participating in sports (</english/healthy-living/sports/Pages/default.aspx>) and recreational activities.

### Benefit of Mouthguards

Mouthguards, also called mouth protectors, help cushion a blow to the face, minimizing the risk of broken teeth and injuries to your lips, tongue, face or jaw. They typically cover the upper teeth and are a great way to protect the soft tissues of your tongue, lips and cheek lining. Knowing how to prevent injuries like these is especially important if your child participates in organized sports or other recreational activities.



When it comes to protecting your mouth, a mouthguard is an essential piece of athletic gear that should be part of standard equipment from an early age. In fact, studies show that athletes are 60 times more likely to suffer harm to the teeth if they are not wearing a mouthguard. While collision and contact sports, such as boxing (</English/news/Pages/Children-and-Teens-Shouldn't-Box-Say-Pediatricians.aspx>), are higher-risk sports for the mouth, you can experience a dental injury in non-contact activities too, such as gymnastics (</English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Gymnastics.aspx>) and skating (</English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Figure-Skating.aspx>).

### Three Types of Mouthguards:

- **Custom-fitted.** These are made by your dentist for you personally. They are more expensive than the other versions, but because they are customized, usually offer the best fit.
- **Stock.** These are inexpensive and come pre-formed, ready to wear. Unfortunately, they often don't fit very well. They can be bulky and can make breathing and talking difficult.
- **Boil and bite.** These mouth protectors can be bought at many sporting goods stores and drugstores and may offer a better fit than stock mouth protectors. They are first softened in boiling water, then inserted and allowed to adapt to the shape of your mouth.

The best mouthguard is one that has been custom made for your mouth by your dentist (</English/family-life/health-management/pediatric-specialists/Pages/What-is-a-Pediatric-Dentist.aspx>). However, if you cannot afford a custom-fitted mouthguard, your child should still wear a stock mouthguard or a boil-and-bite mouthguard from the drugstore. If your child wears braces or another fixed dental appliance on your lower jaw, your dentist may suggest a mouth protector for these teeth as well.

A properly fitted mouthguard may be especially important for people who wear braces or have fixed bridge work. A blow to the face could damage the brackets or other fixed orthodontic appliances. A mouthguard also provides a barrier between the braces and your cheek or lips, limiting the risk of soft tissue injuries.

### Talk to Your Child's Dentist or Orthodontist

Talk to your dentist or orthodontist (</English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Dental-Health-and-Orthodontic-Problems.aspx>) about selecting a mouthguard that will provide the best protection. Although mouthguards typically only cover the upper teeth, your dentist or orthodontist may suggest that your child use a mouthguard on the lower teeth if you have braces on these teeth too.

If your child has a retainer or other removable appliance, do not wear it during any contact sports.

## Tips for Caring for a Mouthguard:

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- Rinse before and after each use or brush with a toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Occasionally clean the mouthguard in cool, soapy water and rinse thoroughly.
- Transport the mouthguard in a sturdy container that has vents.
- Never leave the mouthguard in the sun or in hot water.
- Check for wear and tear to see if it needs replacing.

## Additional Resources:

- Dental Health and Orthodontic Problems (/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Dental-Health-and-Orthodontic-Problems.aspx)
- Custom Mouthguards (Video) (<http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/m/mouthguards?channelId=bc7a413fc59842d0b150e5b1acb4f186&channelListId&mediaId=4463fd5400ac4b5582591999645395d0>) (MouthHealthy.org)

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