

Mouth Protectors

Q: What are athletic mouth protectors?

A: Athletic mouth protectors, or mouth guards, are made of soft plastic. They are adapted to fit comfortably to the shape of the upper teeth.

Q: Why are mouth guards important?

A: Mouth guards hold top priority as sports equipment. They protect not just the teeth, but the lips, cheeks, and tongue. They help protect children from such head and neck injuries as concussions and jaw fractures. Increasingly, organized sports are requiring mouth guards to prevent injury to their athletes. Research shows that most oral injuries occur when athletes are not wearing mouth protection.

Q: When should my child wear a mouth guard?

A: Whenever he or she is in an activity with a risk of falls or of head contact with other players or equipment. This includes football, baseball, basketball, soccer, hockey, skateboarding, even gymnastics. We usually think of football and hockey as the most dangerous to the teeth, but nearly half of sports-related mouth injuries occur in basketball and baseball.

Q: How do I choose a mouth guard for my child?

A: Any mouth guard works better than no mouth guard. So, choose a mouth guard that your child can wear comfortably. If a mouth guard feels bulky or interferes with speech, it will be left in the locker room.

You can select from several options in mouth guards. First, preformed or "boil-to-fit" mouth guards are found in sports stores. Different types and brands vary in terms of comfort, protection, and cost. Second, customized mouth guards are provided through your pediatric dentist. They cost a bit more, but are more comfortable and more effective in preventing injuries. Your pediatric dentist can advise you on what type of mouth guard is best for your child.