



Busy with football, basketball and soccer games, hockey practice and boxing matches? These and many other activities are fun and great ways to make friends, but they can also lead to injuries to your mouth and teeth. Many of these injuries are preventable with a mouthguard.

What are they?

Mouthguards are made of plastic molded to fit over your teeth and are designed to protect the teeth and gums from injury during athletic activities. Typically, a mouthguard covers your upper teeth. If you have braces or orthodontia on your lower teeth, your dentist or orthodontist may advise you to wear a mouthguard covering these teeth as well.

I don't have braces or any orthodontia. Do I need to wear a mouthguard?

Yes, anyone that is participating in a sport where there is even a minor risk of injury to his/her mouth should wear a mouthguard.

What can happen if I don't wear a mouthguard?

- Chipped/broken/knocked out teeth
- Nerve damage
- Damaged mouth tissue
- Cuts to the lip, tongue or face
- Facial fractures
- Concussion

How would a mouthguard prevent me from getting a concussion?

The shock from an impact with the jaw can reverberate through your skull to the brain. A well-fitting mouthguard can absorb some of this shock and help prevent it from spreading.

Should I keep my retainer in when wearing my mouthguard?

No, anything that can be removed from the mouth should be removed before wearing a mouthguard.

What kinds of mouthguards are available?

- A ready-made mouthguard can be bought "off of the shelf" but is not fitted to your individual teeth.
- A "boil and bite" mouthguard is formed by placing the mouthguard in hot water to soften and then biting and forming it to your teeth. This type usually gives you an increased comfort level with a better individual fit.
- A custom-fitted mouthguard that is made by your dentist or orthodontist offers maximum comfort and protection by fitting your teeth exactly.

Don't forget to wear your mouthguard during practice as well as during games!

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.