

Sports and exercise are excellent for maintaining fitness, health, and general well-being. Sometimes protecting the mouth can be neglected, like wearing mouthguards which could prevent serious damage to your teeth as well as minimising the impact of trauma to the jaw and face.



MOUTHGUARDS

Mouthguard Awareness

Trauma to the mouth from sporting incidents is the most common dental injury people present with to their dentist and in most cases it is an emergency visit. Many of these injuries could have been avoided or minimised if a mouthguard had been worn. Wearing a mouthguard can prevent serious injury, in some cases the difference being a bruised lip and teeth compared to a fractured tooth and lacerated lip. Restorative dental work is expensive; preventive measures like wearing mouthguards are always cheaper. Dentists highly recommend wearing a mouth guard for all sporting activities.

Who, when and why are mouthguards necessary

People of all ages participating in sports should consider wearing a mouthguard. Contact sports are certainly a must-do, like AFL or boxing, however, too often dentists see dental trauma from non-contact sports like basketball, cycling, soccer or cricket. Team training sessions should not be an exception to the rule, always wear a mouthguard when participating in sports, whether it be training, game time, or at home in the backyard.

Trauma to the mouth can cause, knocked-out, fractured, or broken teeth, nerve damage to the tooth

itself, a broken jaw, and lacerations to the tongue, lips, gums, and inside of the cheeks. Dental trauma can become a lifelong problem. Injuries that require restorative work do not last forever and will require follow-up treatments and care.



MOUTHGUARDS CONT...

Protecting the mouth

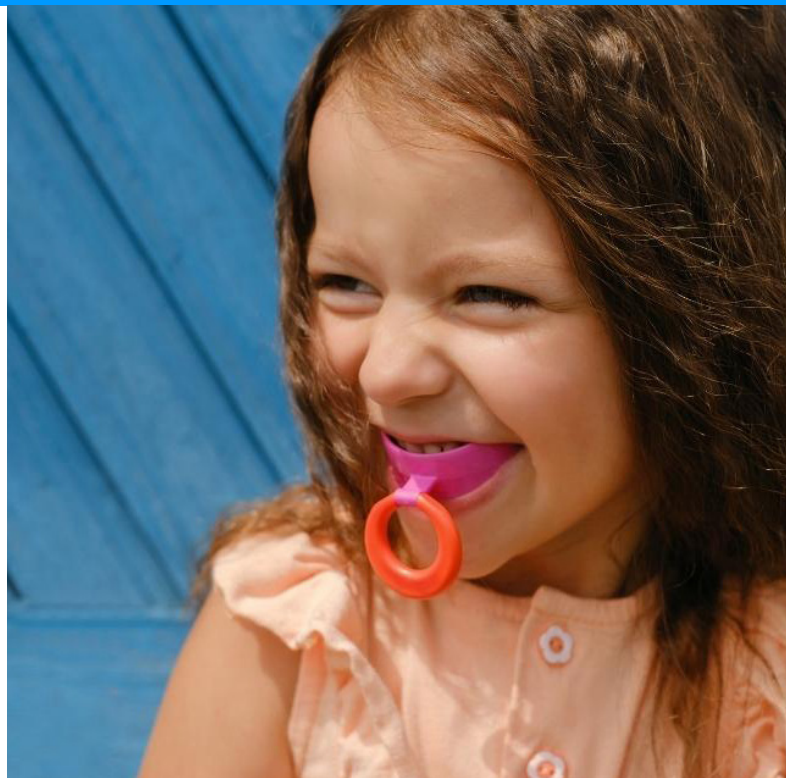
Dentists recommend wearing custom-fitted mouthguards during all sporting activities that pose a risk of incidental trauma to the face. Dental trauma can even lead to extended periods without being able to eat or speak properly, negatively impacting your general health and well-being and causing time away from school and work.

Types of mouthguards – Over-the-counter vs Custom-fitted

Over-the-counter mouthguards can be useful for children playing sports with minimal risk of injuries occurring. Children’s teeth and mouths change and grow rapidly making over-the-counter options a viable solution. However, these over-the-counter options offer less protection compared to custom-fitted mouthguards which are recommended for all medium to high-risk sports.

Custom-fitted mouthguards allow for easier breathing, and being able to speak more clearly and comfortably, they do not fall out easily and do not become dangerous in the event of a collision.

Dentists take an impression of your teeth with a fast-curing alginate they can then make a model from. This allows for a mouthguard to cover all exposed surface areas of the teeth and to be shaped for a snug and secure fit.



Caring for your mouthguard

Mouthguards should be rinsed regularly and stored in a cool dry place. Custom-fitted mouthguards from your dentist will come with a small storage capsule. Keep out of direct sunlight and clean with a toothbrush after each use when you can. It is best to take the mouthguard to your regular dental check-ups so it can be assessed for damage or to ensure it still fits securely.

Mouthguard tips to remember.

- Always rinse your mouthguard after use.
- Store in a hard container that allows for airflow.
- Store in a cool dry place.
- Do not leave in direct sunlight, high temperatures cause mouthguards to deform.
- Rinse and gently brush the mouthguard with mouthwash and a toothbrush to clean and remove bacteria after each use.
- Take your mouthguard to your regular dental check-ups. Your dentist will check to see if it still fits correctly, ensure there is no damage, and does not require a replacement.



SPORTS DRINKS

Staying hydrated

It is always recommended to consume tap water to maintain hydration. Tap water is cheap, contains fluoride, and poses no risk to your teeth and gums. While sports drinks do contain electrolytes that aid in hydration they also contain sugars and acids that if consumed regularly can cause tooth decay and gum disease.

Reasons for consuming sports drinks

Sports drinks are often consumed unnecessarily for the enjoyable flavours and feel that it is healthier than drinking a soft drink. Sports drinks can be okay for you if consumed in moderation during high-intensity activities. However, just like most manufactured products; the sugars and acids contained in these drinks do pose a risk to your oral health. Always be mindful of how much produced food and drinks are being consumed and maintain good oral hygiene practices to combat these products. The little benefits sports drinks add to performance and hydration do not outweigh the damage they can do to your teeth.

Gym supplements

Gym supplements for, pre-, during, and post-workouts supply the body with carbohydrates and proteins along with other substances that can aid in muscle recovery and growth. While some of these products are not terrible for your oral health, many contain sugars and acids that can erode teeth. Pre and during workouts supplements are the most dangerous as they are often



high in sugars, caffeine, and amino acids. Consuming these products frequently increases the risk of tooth decay and gum disease, moderation is always key to minimising risk to your oral health.

Read the label

Always read the label and be aware and mindful of what you are consuming. There are gym supplements available that are of low risk to your oral health. Avoid drinks and supplements that are high in acid and sugar. Some supplements could pose other general health concerns, always speak with a health professional before consuming gym supplements. Do your research; if unsure, the best option is not to drink it and consume water and fresh produce instead.

Sport Drinks Tips

- **Never swish sports drinks and supplements around your mouth.**
- **Using a straw can help reduce the risk of damage to your teeth.**
- **Consume tap water to stay hydrated instead of sports drinks.**
- **Discuss your nutrition and exercise regime with your dentist.**
- **Seek advice from an accredited sports dietitian, they are best placed to advise whether or not sports drinks and supplements will be necessary or beneficial.**





FIRST AID FOR TEETH TRAUMA

Wearing custom-fitted mouthguards for sports, training, and activities is imperative to minimising the risk of injuries to your mouth and face. Dental injuries can be painful, expensive, and traumatising. Prevention is always the best cause of action for your safety and well-being.

What to do in the case of a dental emergency

Even when we are cautious and take the necessary safety measures, accidents can still occur. It is vital to know what to do when a dental injury occurs. Sometimes trauma to the teeth may not be visible to the naked eye and in some cases, it may be possible that knowing what to do could save a knocked-out tooth.

Knocked out teeth

Baby (deciduous) teeth

Babies and children are susceptible to injuring themselves, especially when they are learning to crawl, walk, or begin to partake in adventurous activities like climbing the couch or starting up sports. Knowing the correct first-aid treatment is important and could reduce the chances of lasting damage.

Step 1: Never attempt to put a baby (deciduous) tooth back into the mouth. If there is uncertainty about whether or not it is an adult or baby tooth. Follow 'Step 4: for adult teeth' for instructions on storing knocked-out teeth.

Step 2: Book an emergency dental visit immediately so a dentist can properly assess the damage.

Step 3: Book regular dental check-ups. Dental visits are more important after dental trauma to monitor and ensure the proper development of adult teeth.

Adult teeth

Step 1: hopefully the tooth can be located. Never pick up the tooth by the root, only touch the tooth by the crown (the part of the tooth visible in the mouth).

Step 2: Rinse the tooth in milk preferably, only use water if milk is not accessible. Do not brush or scrub the tooth to remove dirt.

Step 3: Place the tooth back into your gum from where it fell out, try to ensure it goes in correctly, and use a mirror or assistance from another person to visibly see if it looks right. To help keep the tooth in place your mouthguard can be used to keep it secure or gently bite down on a clean cloth or tissue or potentially use aluminium foil to wrap around the tooth and surrounding area.

Step 4: DO NOT FORCE the tooth back in if it is too difficult to insert.

- Rinse the tooth in milk
- Do not let the tooth dry out
- Do not wrap in cloth or tissue
- Store the tooth in a small container
- Keep the tooth completely covered with milk or saliva
- Do not place the tooth in water

Step 5: Seek immediate emergency dental treatment – it is possible the tooth can be saved if dental treatment can be administered quickly. Preferably within 30 minutes. Most dentists and dental hospitals offer emergency and after-hours services for such scenarios. Check their websites for contact details.

Fractured, cracked, or chipped teeth

Trauma to teeth may not always be visible. Fractured, cracked, or chipped teeth can go unnoticed. It is important to book an appointment or call your dentist for advice if you are at all concerned. For obvious cracks and chips, store the cracked bit of tooth (if it can be located) as described above in 'Step 4: for adult teeth'. Book an appointment as soon as possible. Cracked or broken teeth can sometimes be reattached.

Key first-aid tips to remember

- DO NOT hold the tooth by the root
- DO NOT brush or scrub the surface of the tooth
- DO NOT allow the tooth to dry out
- DO NOT store the tooth in water
- SEEK IMMEDIATE DENTAL TREATMENT