

Remember mouth guards when purchasing sporting goods

25 April 2017, by Dr. Rodrigo Fuentealba

One piece of safety equipment often ignored when purchasing sporting goods is the mouth guard. Each year, more than five million teeth are avulsed (come out of the socket) due to trauma. The cost to treat an avulsed tooth, over a lifetime, can range from \$5,000 to \$20,000. Not only do mouth guards reduce the possibility of dental injuries, they reduce the severity of injuries that do occur and the cost of care. That is why a properly fitted mouth guard or mouth protector should be used by anyone who practices contact sports, some non-contact sports or any activity that poses a risk of injury to the mouth.

In the early 20th century, boxing became the first organized sport to mandate [mouth](#) protection. A few decades later football players began using mouth guards, and in 1962 the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) made them mandatory. Today the NCAA requires mouth guards for women's and men's lacrosse, field and ice hockey. Though baseball and basketball have frequent injuries, few participants wear mouth guards. The American Dental Association and the International Academy for Sports Dentistry currently recommend that mouth guards be used in 29 sports.

There are three types of mouth guards: ready-made, mouth formed and custom-made. Ready-made mouth guards are usually inexpensive and come in sizes that range from small to large. These mouth guards require the wearer's mouth be closed for them to stay in place. Mouth-formed guards can be purchased at sporting goods stores and work by enabling wearers to shape them to their bite and mouth shape. These types of mouth guards offer adequate cushioning, retention and absorption. A custom-made mouth guard is individually designed and fitted in a dental office. Although these types of mouth guards are more expensive, evidence shows they provide better retention and comfort and are more adaptable to orthodontic appliances, like braces.

A dentist should be able to provide a custom-made mouth guard and other types can usually be purchased at sporting goods stores. For children, mouth guards should be reevaluated during each six-month visit to the dentist; patients should bring their mouth guard to every appointment. To ensure mouth guards are clean and make it through a sports season they should be rinsed before and after use with cold water or an antiseptic mouthwash; they should also be cleaned with a toothbrush and toothpaste.

A lost tooth due to sports injury can have long-term effects on dental health, especially for children. Mouth guards reduce the risk and severity of [injury](#) and should be used as often as any other piece of protective sporting equipment.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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