

Importance of Mouthguard Use in Youth Sports

Facts:

- 20 – 25 million youths participate in competitive sports
- Sports are accountable for approximately 36% of unintentional injuries to children and adolescents and of these injuries 10 – 20% are maxillofacial
- CDC reports that more than half of the 7 million sports/recreation-related injuries that occur each year are sustained by youth 5 years old and up
- CDC reports that 19 % of head and face injuries are sport related and 1/3 of all dental injuries are sport related
- Dental injuries are the most common orofacial injury sustained during sport participation
- An estimated 3 million teeth are knocked out each year in youth sporting events
- Athletes are 60 times more likely to sustain damage to teeth when not wearing a mouthguard
- A study of H.S. athletes found that 75% of injuries occurred when mouthguards were not worn and 40% occurred during baseball and basketball
- Baseball and basketball have the highest incidence of sport-related dental injuries in children ages 7 – 17; Baseball was highest in the 7 – 12 age group and basketball was highest in the 13 – 17 age group
- Delta Dental: “Almost half of all sports injuries to the mouth happen in baseball and basketball
- The majority of sport-related dental and orofacial injuries affect the upper lip, maxilla, and most often the maxillary incisors (50 – 90%)

Consequences:

- Chipped or broken teeth, knocked out teeth (avulsion), teeth pushed into the wrong position (luxation), root damage to the teeth, lip and cheek injuries, fractured jaws, concussions
- Potential for pain, psychological effects, and economic implications; Costs accrue over a patient’s lifetime with ongoing restorative, endodontic (root canal), prosthodontic (crown and bridge), implant, or surgical treatment
- Indirect costs: children’s lost hours from school, parents lost hours from work; these consequences disproportionately strain lower income, minority, and un-insured children and their families

Consider This:

- Starting in 1962 all American H.S. football players were required to wear mouthguards during games. Since then orofacial protectors (mouthguards, face shields, helmets) have reduced oral trauma from 50% of all injuries to 1%.
- American Academy of Pediatric Dentists (AAPD): “The administrators of youth, high school, and college football, lacrosse, and ice hockey have demonstrated that dental and facial injuries can be reduced significantly by introducing mandatory protective equipment. Popular sports such as baseball, basketball, soccer, softball, wrestling, volleyball and gymnastics lag far behind”.
- American Academy of Orthodontists (AAO) report that 84% of children don’t wear mouthguards because they aren’t required to wear them while playing organized sports

Organizations in support of mouthguard use in youth sports including baseball, softball, soccer and basketball:

American Dental Association (ADA), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), U.S. Surgeon General, American Association of Orthodontist (AAO), American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), Academy for Sports Dentistry (ASD)