

The importance of mouth guards is underwritten by South African Society of Orthodontists



The history of mouth guards started in 1920 when boxers first began

wearing rubber shields to prevent chipped teeth and cut lips. In America it was a high school football rule to wear intraoral protection since 1962 , and it became mandatory for hockey players to wear mouth guards in 1976.

Mouth guards are vital to protect sportsman's teeth, gums, cheeks and lips. It can also prevent brain- and neck injuries and jaw fractures by absorbing the shock and energy of a serious blow. The very high incidence of concussion and oral cavity injuries amongst primary school rugby players was found to be reduced significantly by the wear of mouth guards.

Many children and adults nowadays wear braces and are at higher risk of tearing and bruising their lips during contact sport. The sharp edges of the orthodontic appliances can cause cuts when receiving a blow to the face. Prefabricated "boil and bite" type of mouth guards that can be modeled over the braces and teeth are highly recommended for sports people with braces. Individually fabricated guards where the braces are blocked out on a model of the patients teeth can also be manufactured by a dental laboratory after you orthodontist has taken an impression of your mouth.

These individually fabricated mouth guards are also recommended for sportspeople with straight teeth and no braces and they should visit their dentists for the necessary impression to make up a mouth guard. Individual guards fit snugly and are usually superior to prefabricated types in terms of adaptation, retention and protection.

Orthodontists also sometimes issue patients with a thicker type of retainer after their teeth has been straightened and the braces removed, that can be worn at night to keep the teeth straight but also serve as a mouth guard for sports.

Specifications of a good mouth guard:

- The material should have an even thickness and come in contact with all teeth when in place
- The upper- and lower teeth should come into contact with the biting surface of the mouth guard
- 1mm thickness of material between upper and lower teeth in case of non contact play and 2mm thickness in contact play
- Jaws should be in neutral position and alignment (not forced forward, backward or sideward)
- Should be replaced every 2-3 years or when the biting surfaces are wearing down or earlier if recommended by your dentist



Children, amateur and professional sportspeople are all urged to wear mouth guards when playing rugby, soccer, hockey, boxing, squash, basketball, martial arts, judo, wrestling, skating, skateboarding, gymnastics, motor cross, skydiving, trampoline, water polo and horseback riding.

Protect your smile

SASO

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