



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Athletes Must Guard Against Injuries

Inexpensive mouthguards can prevent dental disasters

Oak Brook, Ill. (July XX, 2009) – A hockey puck in competitive play can reach speeds of 120 mph, and exert 1,250 pounds of force when it makes contact. Other sources of sports injuries, such as a point guard’s flying elbow and a softball pitch, may not move quite as fast, but the results on an unprotected mouth are the same.

It’s a story all too common. According to the American Dental Association, sports-related injuries knock out two million teeth per year.

And the risk isn’t just in full-contact sports. Mouth injuries in football, for example, have dropped dramatically since mouthguards became mandatory. Studies show that today’s basketball players are 15 times more likely to sustain an orofacial injury than football players.¹ Even sports with no inherent player contact, like biking and gymnastics, introduce the risk of injury from falls and mouth-clenching.

The solution is to wear an athletic mouthguard. An athlete wearing a properly fitted mouthguard is 60 times less likely to suffer tooth damage than an athlete without a mouthguard.²

“Mouthguards have been proven to work,” said Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. “Wearing a mouthguard while participating in sports—or any activity that carries a risk of mouth injury—may protect you from what could otherwise be severe dental damage.”

There are three types of mouthguards currently available:

- Stock mouthguards are relatively inexpensive and have a pre-formed shape. But since the fit can't be adjusted, they're less effective than a fitted option. And sometimes they don't stay in place—which may cause impediments in breathing and speech.
- Mouth-formed mouthguards can be purchased at many sporting goods stores, and can be molded to the individual's mouth, usually by boiling the mouthguard in hot water to soften the plastic.
- Custom-made mouthguards are considered the best option. Since they're made by your dentist from a mold of your teeth, they fit tightly and correctly. Although a custom mouthguard is the most expensive option available, it's a solid investment when compared with the thousands of dollars in dental work it can take to replace a lost tooth.

Still, if cost is a consideration, any mouthguard is better than none at all.

“If you have questions, such as mouthguard use with braces or other dental appliances, talk to the expert—your dentist,” Anderson said.

The not-for-profit Delta Dental Plans Association (www.deltadental.com) based in Oak Brook, Ill., is the leading national network of 39 independent dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to more than 54 million Americans in more than 89,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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¹Academy of General Dentistry, “Mouthguards Fight ‘Weekend Warrior’ Syndrome” <http://www.knowyourteeth.com/infobites/abc/article/?abc=S&iid=331&aid=1326>, February 2007.

²American Dental Association, “Protecting teeth with mouthguards” www.ada.org/prof/resources/pubs/jada/patient/patient_69.pdf, 2006.