News Release

For Immediate Release

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Mouth Off for Mouth Guards
Leading Dental Organization Urges Parents to Speak Up for Increased Mouth Guard Use

OAK BROOK, IL (July 31, 2007) -- For many parents, back-to-school means back-to-sports and a trip to the local sporting goods store to load up on required equipment. Dental experts are urging parents to add mouth guards to their shopping lists, especially if their sons or daughters are involved in contact sports that could result in injuries to mouths, teeth or jaws.

“There are so many contact sports where mouth guards aren’t considered standard equipment but should be,” said Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. “We’re hoping parents can help us change that for the sake of their children’s oral health.”

Commonly worn for more intense contact sports such as football, lacrosse and hockey, Delta Dental recommends that mouth guards be worn for all athletic activities that carry the risk of injury to the face, and particularly to the mouth, teeth and jaw. According to a review of published research conducted by The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), safety-
equipment including mouth guards, helmets and facemasks have been shown to reduce both the frequency and severity of injuries to teeth and mouth.¹

One of the barriers to the wider adoption of mouth guard use, particularly in sports where they’re not traditionally used such as volleyball and basketball, is reluctance on the part of student athletes to use mouth guards if their teammates aren’t. One way to overcome this is for parents to contact their community or school athletic association, or talk to their children’s coaches, to request that mouth guards be added to the list of needed equipment for students in all contact sports.

“When athletic directors and coaches tell entire teams to wear mouth guards, individual students won’t feel singled out,” said Dr. Anderson. “It makes adoption much more routine.”

Price can be another barrier, especially when parents are already plunking down money for special shoes, uniforms and other accessories. The good news is that mouth guards are available in a variety of different styles and price points.

Most sporting goods stores carry “stock” mouth guards which are sold in various sizes and can be used right out of the package, as well as “boil and bite” mouth guards for a better fit. For older student athletes or those in heavier contact sports, a custom-fabricated mouth guard such as those available through dentists and other health professionals is a good idea.

Although the cost of mouth guards can range from under $20 for stock-type mouth guards to several hundred for those that are custom-fitted, athletes and their parents have a strong financial incentive to invest in the protection they offer. Over a lifetime the cost of repairing and replacing damaged teeth can be thousands of dollars.

“A better fit generally means better protection,” said Dr. Anderson. “However, the most basic, inexpensive mouth guard is better than nothing at all.”

Oral health experts also recommend that parents include dentists in their back-to-school preparations.

“Along with physical examinations, back-to-school routines should include dental examinations, especially if the student will be playing contact sports,” Dr. Anderson said. “Dentists can check for any recent injuries to teeth as well as speak with student-athletes and their parents about mouth guards, and what to do if they injure their teeth.”

Delta Dental Plans Association (www.deltadental.com) based in Oak Brook, IL, is a national network of independent not-for-profit dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 50 million Americans in more than 88,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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