



Stay in the Game: WEAR A MOUTHGUARD

Team sports are a great way for children to learn the value of working well with others, get the health benefits of exercise, and have some good-old fun. But when it comes to kids playing contact sports, it's not all fun and games when someone suffers an orofacial injury or concussion. For this reason, the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS), the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS), and the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) have teamed up in support of the *Grin and Wear It*® program, which aims to teach players, parents, and coaches to recognize that mouthguards are an easy way to protect an athlete's smile from serious injury. No one wants to be sidelined with an injury, so wear a mouthguard to stay in the game if you're playing contact sports.



Just as helmets, shoulder pads, and knee pads are worn to protect against sports-related injuries, mouthguards are equally important as protective gear. Mouthguards help prevent injury to the oral cavity, especially to the teeth, lips, cheeks, and tongue. Even athletes who wear helmets or face shields—such as football, hockey, and lacrosse players—should wear mouthguards, since they also protect against head-and-neck injuries by helping to cushion blows that otherwise could result in a concussion or worse.



When it comes to choosing a mouthguard, there are three types widely available: custom-made, boil-and-bite, and stock. Both the stock and the boil-and-bite mouthguards are available in most sporting goods stores and are the least expensive option; however, they offer limited protection, can be uncomfortable to wear, and may make breathing and speaking difficult. The custom-made mouthguard is by far the best mouthguard in terms of fit, comfort, and protection because it is made from an impression a dentist takes of the athlete's teeth. By pressure-laminating the mouthguard during its fabrication, the final product is designed to fit the athlete's mouth exactly. The MDS recommends that athletes wear custom-made mouthguards when participating in contact sports, because they offer the best protection from orofacial injury and are considered the most comfortable to wear. Players and parents: Consult with your dentist to determine which mouthguard is best for you.

The MDS, MMS, and MCAAP recommend that adults and children wear mouthguards during all sports in which injury to the mouth may occur. This way, if you end up losing, it will only be a game.



Learn more about mouthguards and the *Grin and Wear It*® program at massdental.org/mouthguards.

A bright future begins with a healthy smile.