



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mouthguard Awareness - Dentists calls for mandatory mouthguards

Children playing sports without mouthguards run a huge risk of traumatic facial injuries, according to the Australian Dental Association Incorporated (ADA Inc), which has launched a Mouthguard Awareness Campaign.

Chairman of the ADA Oral Health Committee, Dr. Derek Lewis says the Association believes mouthguards should be compulsory for all children participating in contact sports.

“Defend your smile is the catch cry of dentists,” Dr. Lewis said.

“There are far too many unnecessary, serious and even permanent injuries to teeth because a mouthguard was not worn or fitted correctly. The absence of a mouthguard can result in long and potentially expensive treatment to restore knocked out teeth”, he added.

“Mouthguards also help reduce the risk of jaw fractures and concussion caused by a collision. They should be worn during any sport where there is the chance of a knock or contact to the face”, Lewis said.

The Sports Medicine Association reports that 50% of children experience some form of dental injury, with 25% of them sustaining an injury to a permanent tooth by the time they reached 14 years of age.

Mouthguards are a removable soft plastic shield worn over teeth. They are worn most commonly over the upper teeth to protect them and jaws from traumatic injury.

Types of Mouthguards:

‘Over-the-counter’ or ‘boil-and-bite’ mouthguards are available through pharmacies. However, they cannot take individual mouth size and teeth into account. They can be uncomfortable and offer limited protection, because they often have poor suction and can fall out.

The ADA Inc recommends investing in a custom-fitted mouthguard because it is moulded to the shape of your teeth, making it more comfortable and protective. A correctly fitted mouthguard will protect teeth, stop biting onto the lips and cushion teeth to reduce the risk of concussion and jaw fracture and not impede breathing.

The ADA says that although the Association recommends the use of the custom made mouthguards wherever possible, an over-the-counter mouthguard is better than no protection at all.

Standards Australia similarly supports custom fitted mouthguards. Its guidelines for mouthguards state: “Custom-fitted mouthguards (formed on a cast of the wearer’s jaw) are the most acceptable. Mouth-formed and stock mouthguards have disadvantages with respect to lack of retention, single-tooth contact, inadequate thickness, incorrect fitting and often rapid deterioration with consequent risk of injury.”

Mouthguard Tips:

- Wear your mouthguard at training and during the game
- Rinse your mouthguard before and after use
- Update your mouthguard every 12 months, to ensure it is fully effective
- Wash your mouthguard only with soap and in cold or lukewarm water
- Keep your mouthguard clean, stored in a rigid container and away from heat to ensure it maintains its shape
- For children, mouthguards may need to be replaced more regularly than 12 months as children's mouths are growing and deciduous (first) teeth are being lost and replaced with permanent teeth.

ADA Inc is urging parents, schools and coaches to make wearing a mouthguard mandatory for children and sportspeople playing contact sports, which put teeth at risk.

"A mouthguard is an investment in avoiding potentially painful and costly dental injuries.