

Mouthguards for Athletes

Although human teeth are solidly embedded in bone, they can be forcefully knocked out or broken off very easily. Any blow to the face, applied with adequate force, can dislodge a tooth or several teeth or break teeth off. When teeth are knocked out, they can be replaced back into the mouth, but the the long-term success of this technique is questionable. The best decision for you is to prevent breaking or knocking out teeth.

Mouthguards should be worn by anyone participating in sports that have the potential to provide a forceful blow to the oral area. There are five types of mouthguards available:

- 1. Stock Mouthguards:** These are readily available in stores, but their value is minimal. Although these guards are relatively inexpensive, the protection they provide is questionable.
- 2. “Boil and Bite” Mouthguards:** These guards are of minimal value, but they may be somewhat better than no guard at all.
- 3. Custom Vacuum-Formed Mouthguards:** Your dentist can make a mouthguard that fits just your mouth. These mouthguards are better than stock or “Boil and Bite” mouthguards.
- 4. Custom Laminated Pressure-Formed Mouthguards:** These excellent mouthguards can either be made by your dentist or your dentist will prescribe a dental laboratory to make the mouthguard.
- 5. Custom Injection-Molded Mouthguards:** These mouthguards are precisely adapted to both the teeth and the opposing arch of teeth.

Levels 4 and 5 above are by far the best mouthguards for your athlete. However, they are more expensive than items 1–3.

Don't be misled by price. Many young athletes break or dislodge teeth, costing thousands of dollars in dental rehabilitation. Some rehabilitations have a finite service life, and may require additional service throughout the athlete's life. Investing in a quality mouthguard is your best option to protect natural dentition!