

Fall Fix Ups: Getting Your Dental Protection Ready for Sports

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by Dr. Brad Edgren

Fall is rapidly coming upon us and so is football season. Football season is a good reminder of the importance of mouthguards and protection of your teeth during organized athletics.

Mouthguards serve as shock absorbers, absorbing blows to the mouth that might otherwise result in broken, or worse yet, loss of teeth, lacerated lips, cheeks and/or tongue.

Many athletes don't fully appreciate the importance of mouthguards as part of their sports kit. They believe they are only important in football. However, mouthguards are just as important as helmets, shoulder pads and knee pads.

Mouthguards are not only important in contact sports such as football but also in non-contact sports such as baseball, softball, volleyball, basketball and even soccer. Accidental blows to the face can occur in all of these athletic endeavors resulting in the loosening or loss of teeth. Blows to the face can affect teeth where initially it appears that the trauma was minimal, but later, the affected tooth turns dark and requires root canal treatment, up to years later. There is even some evidence that wearing a mouthguard can reduce concussions during athletic participation.

I have treated many patients that have suffered devastating injuries to their mouth playing non-contact sports including baseball, softball, horseback riding, football and basketball. Many times these injuries would have been minimized if they were wearing a mouthguard. The cost of wearing a mouthguard is negligible compared to the cost of a visit to the dentist to repair the damage inflicted by not wearing one. The replacement of a tooth lost, or even several teeth, due to not wearing a mouthguard can result in a dental bill ranging up to several thousand dollars.

Take proper care of your mouthguard. Do not chew on it or leave in hot places such as cars or athletic bags in the hot, bright sun. Both habits can warp and deform your mouthguard



No guard trauma.



A dental laboratory technician displays the difference between a sports and a customized mouth guard.



A young football player displays his athletic mouth guard.

reducing its future effectiveness. Choose a mouthguard that is strong yet flexible, fits your teeth appropriately and is easy to clean. Ask your dentist about the type of mouthguard that is best suited for you and your sport. If you think you should be wearing a mouth guard when participating in sports, then you should probably be wearing one. 

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