

The Bay Area Beacon

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Preventing Injuries With Proper Fit

Pick the Right Mouthguard to Protect Our Patients

Recently, a pediatric dentist called my lab about a mother who loved the nightguard I made for her son so much that she wanted to ask if I could also make a custom sports mouthguard to protect him while skiing. I was thrilled to get this kind of feedback — mainly because it's very important for parents to buy the proper sports guards for their children.

In many sports, kids can be pushed around or lose balance and fall unexpectedly on their own. Now that it's February and spring is around the corner, I wanted to review a few facts about sports mouthguards that your patients might start asking you about, especially for their kids.

Q: Why is wearing a sports mouthguard important?

A: Mouthguards help prevent teeth from being chipped, broken, or knocked out and even reduce the severity of a concussion. Many athletes wear mouthguards, and children should be no exception. According to the American Dental Association (ADA), over 200,000 oral injuries are prevented every year by wearing a mouthguard. They protect kids' teeth, lips, and tongue and absorb and redistribute forces from an impact to the face and head.

Q: Why should I order a custom sports mouthguard?



A: It's safer, easier to speak through, and more comfortable — plus, it's customizable and can be made with team colors and with the athlete's name! When purchasing an over-the-counter mouthguard from a pharmacy or off-the-shelf guard from a sporting goods store, kids often (understandably!) complain about discomfort and difficulties in speaking while wearing them. They aren't durable or nearly as safe as the custom-made guards from a dental laboratory. Nobody wants a mouthguard to shatter or break while it's in their child's mouth. It can lead to more serious oral injury.

Q: Do all sports require the same amount of protection?

A: No, some sports require more protection than others. At Berkeley Dental Laboratory, I can help customize the level of protection of the mouthguard to the sport. For example, a child who does gymnastics will need less protection than a child playing football, where the playing field can be a little more aggressive. Or for a patient who does not play sports but wears braces, I recommend a very light, thinner mouthguard. This will protect the soft tissue surrounding the braces, while being comfortable to wear.

Overall, there are four types of mouthguards I make for our patients: **Sports Guards, Night Guards, Day Guards, and Retainers.** However, sports mouthguards are something I've always loved providing for my doctors because it's a great feeling to know I am helping to prevent serious, potentially painful, and costly injuries for our patients — and having four daughters of my own, I know I am giving parents peace of mind for their kids.

As the kids would say, our sports guards are "built different" because they're custom-made for a child's mouth with the perfect bite and comfort. Don't let spring creep up with your patients unprepared — if they need a sports guard, I will make them the very best for their child!

-Darrell Lee