

# MOUTH

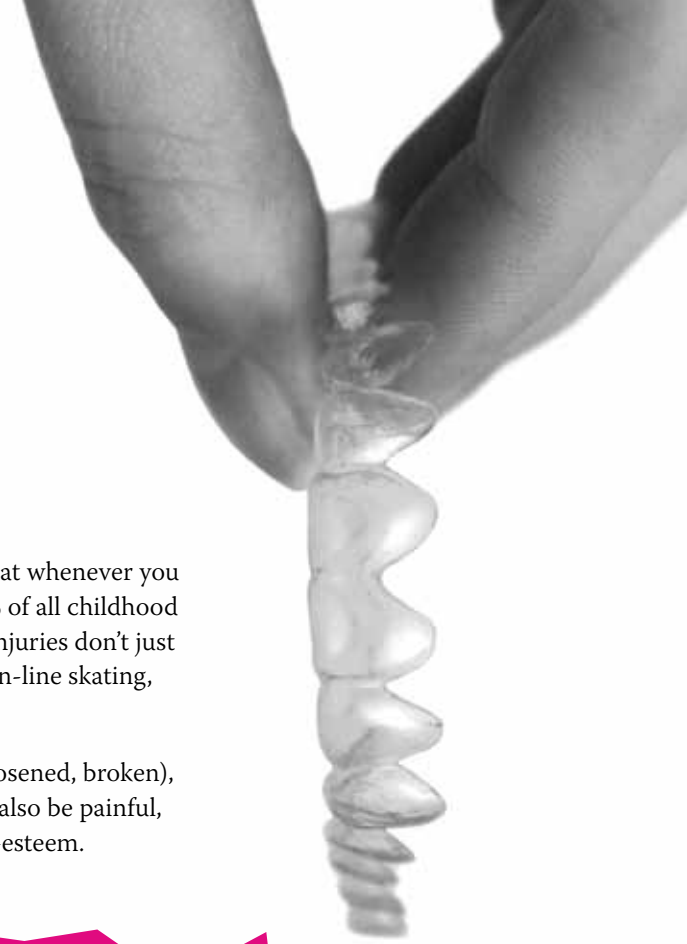
## GUARDS

USE THEM, DON'T LOSE THEM!

→ They help cushion a blow and protect lips, gums, and teeth against injuries...

There are many health benefits to being active, but it's important to remember that whenever you take part in physical activity, there's always risk of injury. In fact, about 10 to 40% of all childhood dental injuries are sports-related (Fakhruddin, Lawrence, Kenny, & Locke, 2007). Dental injuries don't just occur in contact sports (e.g., hockey). Other types of activities, such as baseball, in-line skating, skateboarding, bicycling, and skiing also pose a risk.

Dental injuries can be serious and may result in damaged teeth (e.g., chipped, loosened, broken), change in teeth colour, infections, broken jaw, and teeth loss. Dental injuries can also be painful, costly, may require surgery, and can have negative effects on appearance and self-esteem.



**THE GOOD NEWS IS...** that many dental injuries can be prevented if a mouthguard is worn while engaging in sport and recreational activities. A mouthguard is a removable appliance that fits over the teeth. Functionally, it helps cushion a blow and protect lips, gums and, teeth against injuries (e.g., bruises, cuts, chipped or broken teeth). Presently, there are three common types of athletic mouthguards.

## STOCK

### QUALITIES

- Ready-for-wear.
- Are low-cost.
- Can be purchased at sporting good stores.

### LIMITATIONS

- Available only in limited sizes (e.g., youth and adults). Therefore, this type of mouthguard may not fit properly over teeth.
- Provides limited comfort and protection.
- Can be bulky and may interfere with breathing and speech.
- May cause jaw joint problems.

## MOUTH-FORMED

(i.e., boil-and-bite)

### QUALITIES

- Place mouthguard into boiling water until it softens (i.e., about 5-10 seconds). Remove, let it cool down a bit and then place into the mouth and bite into the plastic.
- Are low-cost and can be purchased at sporting goods stores.
- Most common type used.

### LIMITATIONS

- May not properly cover all teeth.
- May provide a loose fit over teeth.
- May cause jaw joint problems.
- May become thin in certain areas when the mouthguard is first formed, which can limit protection.

## CUSTOM-MADE

### QUALITIES

- Made specifically for the individual by a dental professional.
- Provides a good fit, comfort, and known to offer the best protection.
- Minimal interference with speech or breathing, and rarely cause jaw joint problems.
- Cost may vary. Some dental plans cover the cost of a custom made mouthguard. Talk with your dentist.



## HOW TO CHOOSE A MOUTHGUARD:

Regardless of which mouthguard type you choose, a properly fitted mouthguard should:

- Remain in place during the activity.
- Be comfortable and sturdy.
- Not interfere with breathing or speech.
- Be easy to clean.

*Wear your mouthguard as it's intended to be worn.*

## PROPER MOUTHGUARD USE AND CARE:

- Wear your mouthguard as it's intended to be worn. For example, wear it during all practices and games, and don't share your mouthguard with others.
- Keep your mouthguard clean. You can clean it with toothpaste and a toothbrush, or with cold, soapy water. Rinse it well.
- Rinse your mouthguard with cold water or mouthwash before and after each use.
- Store and carry your mouthguard in a firm container that has vents. But make sure the washed mouthguard is dry before closing the container.
- Bring your mouthguard to dentist appointments to have it inspected.
- Check your mouthguard often. If your mouthguard has holes, tears, cracks, splits, or no longer fits properly, replace it right away. It's recommended that a mouthguard be replaced every two to three years or after a strong blow.

**Check your mouthguard often.**



## IMPROPER USE OF A MOUTHGUARD:

- Don't expose or place your mouthguard in direct sunlight or hot temperatures. This can cause distortion.
- Don't cut or chew on your mouthguard. Doing so can create sharp edges that can result in cuts to the gum and cause infections.
- Don't wear a dental appliance (i.e., retainers, removable bridges, and dentures) with a mouthguard.



*Whenever you take part in sport and recreational activities, always wear a mouthguard and follow the steps outlined above on proper mouthguard use and care. It's important to be active, but it's equally important to protect yourself from dental injuries.*

### KEY REFERENCES:

Fakhruddin, K. S., Lawrence, H. P., Kenny, D. J., and Locke, D. (2007). Use of mouthguards among 12- to-14 year old Ontario schoolchildren. *The Journal of the Canadian Dental Association*, 73(6), 505-505e.

Health Canada. (2007). *Athletic mouthguards*. Retrieved March 7, 2011 from [http://www.div-laur.com/Docs/It\\_sYourHealth-AthleticMouthguards.pdf](http://www.div-laur.com/Docs/It_sYourHealth-AthleticMouthguards.pdf)

