

# Mouth guards



More people are playing sport and the incidence of sport related dental injuries is increasing. Mouth guards are an essential part of contact sports such as football and hockey, but it is the lower impact sports such as netball where many of the injuries are being seen. An accidental elbow to the face can cause damage to the teeth, lips, cheek and tongue. While you may still end up with bruising, a mouth guard can significantly reduce the damage to your teeth. A chipped, broken or knocked out tooth can be a painful experience that requires lengthy and costly treatment to correct.

Children who play contact sports, or participate in activities of high accident risk need to wear a custom-made mouth guard. A custom-made mouth guard is laboratory fabricated and made from durable material. It is made specifically to fit each mouth and the arrangement of teeth. There are lots of colours and combinations available, which makes them a bit more fun for children. Remember, as your child's mouth grows and teeth move, a new mouth guard should be made.

There are a number of different mouth guards available from the "off the shelf boil" style through to one that is professional fabricated and fitted. A mouth guard that is professionally fitted from your dentist involves taking impressions of your teeth and having the mouth guard made by a laboratory from a strong acrylic material. The better the fit and the stronger the material, the better protection the mouth guard will give you.



The design of mouth guards can also be altered to increase your performance and this is becoming popular for elite and professional athletes. It involves using the mouth guard to change the position of your jaw and open the airway to improve oxygen intake. If you are interested in this technology, talk to your dentist or ask for a referral to a dentist who has a special interest in mouth guard sports performance.

## **What to do if your tooth is knocked out**

- Place your tooth in cool milk or salt water.
  - DO NOT wash it off or clean it.
- Get to your dentist immediately – in some cases the tooth can be saved.
- If the accident occurs after hours, go straight to your local hospital emergency department and request to see an oral surgeon. Call the practice first thing the next working day and schedule an appointment to see your own dentist.