

Choosing the mouth guard that’s right for your sport and recreational activities

The Academy for Sports Dentistry, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, American Association of Orthodontists and the American Dental Association recommend that all children and adults engaging in organized sports or recreational activities should wear comfortable, well-fitted mouth guards that do not restrict breathing, resist tearing and are easy to clean.

Organized sports include, but are not limited to, football, wrestling, basketball, baseball, volleyball, ice and field hockey, softball and soccer. Recreational sports include cycling, inline skating, skateboarding or any activity in which the face could come in contact with a hard object, another person or the pavement.

Types of Mouth Guards:

There are three types of mouth guards available:

Type	Description	Pros	Cons
Custom-made	Custom made from a full-mouth impression taken in the dentist’s office and sent to a dental lab for fabrication.	Provides the most protection and comfort. Covers all teeth and cushions the jaw. No interference with speech or breathing. Adjustable for all sports.	More expensive than commercially made mouth guards.
Mouth-formed or “Boil-and-Bite”	Boiled in water for a period of time and then formed to the teeth by applying pressure.	Cost effective. Available from department and sporting goods stores. Provides better individual fit than stock mouth guards.	Tend to wear quickly and may need to be replaced during the sports season. Difficult to adapt to orthodontic appliances. Difficult to speak and breathe.
Stock or commercial mouth guards	Rubber or polyvinyl and sold in small, medium or large sizes.	Sold in major department and sporting goods stores. Inexpensive.	Cannot be modified to fit the individual’s mouth. Least effective in terms of protection. Impairs breathing and stays in place only when mouth is closed.

To get the most of your mouth guard, you'll need to take proper care of the device. Wash it in cool soapy water and rinse it off well before and after each time you use it. For even better protection against germ build up, brush the guard with a toothbrush and toothpaste before and after every use. Also, don't chew on the mouth guard or wear removable retainers with your mouth guard, and be sure to replace your mouth guard when it shows signs of wear and tear.

Because different sports involve risk and potential injury, talk to your dentist or dental specialist before selecting a mouth guard that meets the needs of your child’s specific activity.