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## MOUTH GUARDS

As most people know, wearing a mouth guard while playing a contact sport is essential for protection of the teeth. Let's take a moment to look at some other facts about mouth guards as well as talk about the design of a well-made mouthguard.

Mouth guards were originally conceived to protect the teeth from damage due to an impact from a ball, stick, or body part from an opposing player. I have actually seen upper front teeth which were chipped in a collision in a pickup game of basketball where two players collided and banged their front teeth against each other. **Both** players chipped their front teeth! In addition to protecting the front teeth, a mouthguard should be made to extend above the teeth to protect the bone around the roots of the teeth called the alveolar bone. The extension is called a flange.

More recently, many neurologists believe that some head injuries which resulting concussions, could be avoided by wearing a mouthguard. The reasoning is that in sports where strong impacts occur, can cause the upper and lower teeth to slam together so hard that impact waves resonate throughout the cranium causing micro contusions(broken blood vessels). In addition to the commonly thought of sports in which there is contact, other sports such as figure skating where a hard fall can occur require a mouthguard . As a result, a well constructed mouthguard will be thick enough between the teeth and preferably contain a more impact resistant material to avoid these side effects.

So when selecting the proper mouthguard it is important to consider the age of the athlete, the size of the athlete and The sport he or she is playing. The mouthguard should be made from a material which is inert in the mouth, such as a silicon material. The mouthguard should be a snug fit so that when the mouth is opened it doesn't fall out. The mouthguard should come in different thicknesses as well as different lengths depending on the size of the player. As mentioned above, the layer between the teeth should contain an impact resistant material such as nylon or a reinforcing mesh. When the mouthguard is custom-made it is a good idea to have a light registration of the lower teeth which supports the lower jaw in a comfortable position while the mouthguard is in place. Lastly, since it is so easy to misplace a mouthguard a bright color is a good idea, a strap to attach it to a helmet when appropriate as well as name or initials if it is a custom mouthguard.

We hope you found this helpful. Please feel free to call our office if you have any further questions.