

MOUTHGUARDS

Q What is a mouthguard?

A A mouthguard is a specially made rubber-like cover, which fits exactly over the teeth and gums, cushioning them and protecting them from damage.

Q When would I need a mouthguard?

A It is important to wear a professionally made mouthguard whenever you play sport that involves physical contact or moving objects. This includes: cricket, hockey and football - which can cause broken and damaged teeth; and American football, boxing and rugby - which can all cause broken or dislocated jaws.

A mouthguard will help protect against these events.

Q Where can I get one made?

A Your dentist will be happy to make you a custom-made mouthguard, which will fit your mouth exactly and protect your teeth and gums properly. Custom made mouthguards can prevent damage to the jaw, neck and even the brain – helping to prevent the concussion and damage caused by a heavy blow.

Q How much will it cost?

A You cannot get mouthguards on the NHS, so costs can vary from dentist to dentist. Ask your dentist about mouthguards and always get an estimate before starting treatment. When you consider the cost of expensive dental work and the risk of missing teeth, it is a small price to pay for peace of mind.

Q What about home kits?

A Mouthguards are made by taking an accurate impression of your

mouth and making the mouthguard to fit your own teeth. The dentist will register the way your jaws bite together to make sure the mouthguard meets properly with your teeth.

There are cheaper kits available. They involve heating the product in hot water and then putting it in your mouth until it sets. Unfortunately these mouthguards fit badly and are uncomfortable to wear. They can fall out or even cause choking. Also the material is at its thinnest where it is needed most.

Q How long do custom-made mouthguards last?

A Depending on your age, your mouthguard may need replacing fairly regularly. If you are still growing, new teeth will come through and move into position. So the mouthguard may become too tight or loose, and will need to be remade to fit the new shape of your mouth.

Adults may not need to have their mouthguards replaced quite so often. But they are like any other form of sports equipment and will suffer from wear and tear. It is recommended that you take your mouthguard along to the dentist when you go for your check-up, so it can be checked.

Q Can I get coloured mouthguards?

A There are many types of mouthguard including striped, multi-coloured and clear. Many people now have coloured mouthguards made in their favourite team's colours or to match their own sports strip. Your dentist will be able to tell you whether they are able to provide coloured mouthguards.

Q What do I do if I knock a tooth out?

A Firstly, if you can find the tooth and are not too squeamish - put it back into the socket your self. Or, put it straight into a cup of milk - or water if you don't have any milk available – and don't clean it. Don't hold the tooth by the root, as teeth are surrounded by fragile ligaments, which need to be kept intact, if the tooth is to be replaced.

Don't rinse your mouth out unless you really have to, and go along to your dentist or local Accident and Emergency department immediately. The sooner the tooth is replaced - the better the chance of success. If you have not managed to do it yourself, the dentist will put the tooth back. They may use a dental splint to fasten the tooth against the teeth on either side. In most cases, this is successful and once the splint is removed, the tooth is stable. However you will almost certainly need more treatment in the future.