

Mouthguards

Did you know that the least able part of the body to repair itself after an injury is the teeth?

What is a mouthguard?

At Chilwell dp our mouthguards are a custom-fitted, flexible rubber-like cover which fits exactly over your teeth and gums, cushioning them and protecting them from damage.

They not only provide a degree of protection for the mouth's soft tissues – the lips, cheeks, gums and tongue – they also help protect the teeth and jaw bones (the hard tissues).

When do you need a mouthguard?

Many sports' players do not know the benefits that a mouthguard can provide. A mouthguard is an essential part of the equipment needed for just about any sport. The dental profession throughout the world unanimously supports the use of mouthguards in a variety of sports from rugby to show jumping, from water polo to martial arts, from cycling to volleyball, from football to skateboarding. They are considered by the dental profession to be the 'crash helmets' of teeth.

Whenever you play a sport that involves physical contact or moving objects it is important to wear a professionally made mouthguard.

Not only does a mouthguard protect the teeth from being "knocked out" or fractured, and the lips, cheeks and tongue from being cut or bruised, they also reduce the chance of jaw bone fractures. They do this by helping to absorb the energy of a knock to the face.

In short, if you engage in a sport where there is a strong chance of connecting with other players or with hard surfaces it is advisable to wear a mouthguard.

Do children need a mouthguard?

Yes they do, and particularly so if they have **fixed** braces or are taking part in any sporting activity.

Parents are sometimes not aware of the level of contact and potential for serious dental injuries that can be involved with the sport(s) their children play.

When children (or even adults) are wearing a fixed brace, a blow to the face, however insignificant it can seem, can cause lacerations (cuts) to the inside of the mouth from the “wirework” of the brace.

What injuries can mouthguards prevent?

This may seem like a scary list but mouthguards can help prevent these injuries from occurring.

1. Tooth fracture, tooth dislocation and jaw bone fracture.

The plasticity of a mouthguard can absorb a portion of a force that has been directed to the mouth. At the same time, the rigidity (stiffness) of the mouthguard can help to distribute any force over a greater surface area.

Both of these properties, the plasticity and the rigidity, help to prevent damage to the teeth and jaw bones of those players wearing them.

2. Bruising or laceration of the soft tissues of the mouth.

Being struck in the face has the potential of forcing the soft tissues of the mouth up against or between the teeth resulting in bruising or laceration (cuts). For people wearing a fixed brace the potential for lip and cheek cuts is an almost certainty for those not using a mouthguard.

Mouthguards can act as a buffer between the teeth (hard and sharp) and the soft tissues of the mouth – the lips, cheeks and tongue. The rounded shape of a comparatively soft mouthguard can help protect the soft tissues from injury.

3. Concussion.

The force from a ‘knock’ to the jaw will be passed on to the bones in the skull that surround your brain, thus producing the potential for concussion.

When using a mouthguard some of the force of such a knock will be absorbed. The mouthguard will also help the force be dispersed more evenly. By essentially lessening the intensity of the forces of the blow, the likelihood that concussion will occur is reduced.

4. Psychological trauma.

The smile plays an important role in human relationships and so having damaged teeth can easily affect a person’s confidence. Beyond the embarrassment one might feel of having an “imperfect” smile, this lack of confidence could easily lead to not interacting socially and so losing out on the psychological benefits that such social contact can provide.

Where can you get a mouthguard made?

All the dentists at Chilwell dp will be happy to make you a custom-made mouthguard, which will fit your mouth exactly and protect your teeth and gums properly.

To make a custom mouthguard the dentist will first take an “impression” of your teeth. A plaster cast is then made from the dental impression.

The net result is that the dentist will have a three-dimensional representation of the hard and soft tissues that the mouthguard needs to cover over.

Once the mouthguard has been made – usually between 7 to 10 days at Chilwell dp – the dentist will invite you to return so that they can evaluate the mouthguard’s fit and refine it as necessary so that it fits your mouth perfectly.

How much do mouthguards cost?

You cannot get mouthguards on the NHS.

Here at Chilwell dp we will always provide you with an estimate before starting to make your mouthguard.

The cost to patients who are registered with us starts at £35; for those not registered the cost starts at £50. However, 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.

How long will your mouthguard last?

Like any other form of sports equipment, mouthguards will suffer from wear and tear and so will need to be replaced.

Depending on your age, your mouthguard may need replacing fairly regularly. As you are growing, new teeth come through and move into position. This may result in your mouthguard becoming loose or slack. If this happens your mouthguard will need to be remade to fit the shape of the mouth.

Adults may not need to have their mouthguards replaced quite so often. However, if you notice that it has become slack and / or holes, rips or tears have formed in the mouthguard’s plastic, you should simply realize that its effective lifespan is coming to an end and it needs to be replaced.

What types of mouthguards are available?

There are three main types of mouthguards available: stock mouthpieces, “boil-and-bite” guards and custom-made mouthguards.

Ready-to-wear stock mouthpieces are the least expensive, but they are also the least protective. They are often bulky and uncomfortable to wear and interfere with breathing and speech because they can only be held in position by clenching your teeth together.

With boil-and-bite guards you “customize” the fit of the guard by immersing it in hot water (until it becomes soft and pliable) and then placing it in your mouth, using your fingers, lips, tongues, cheeks and biting pressure to form the contours of the guard. As with the stock mouthpieces, boil-and-bite guards are often bulky and do not fit very well and so will affect both speech and breathing. In addition, the thickness of the “protective” plastic at the sites in the mouth where protection is key can be highly variable.

Professionally custom-made mouthguards are typically considered to be able to provide the greatest level of protection for anyone playing sport. The design is not only individualized for you, but in some cases also for the specific sport you are playing. Also, as the fit and comfort of this type of mouthguard is excellent, they remain secure in your mouth and will not restrict your breathing or speaking.

How should you care for your mouthguard?

When wearing your mouthguard you should make a point of not chewing on it. This habit can rip, tear, or pierce the mouthguard and as a result compromise the level of protection it provides.

After wearing a mouthguard it’s a good idea to clean it. At minimum you should rinse it off using cool water. Better still, gently scrub the mouthguard with your fingers or a toothbrush in warm (not hot) water.

Keep your mouthguard in a well-ventilated hard case. The perforations in the case will allow the mouthguard to dry out thoroughly between each use and the case itself can protect the mouthguard from physical damage.

Heat is bad for mouthguards so never leave it in direct sunlight for extended periods of time, store it in a hot environment (like the inside of your car on a summer day), immerse it in hot water, or place it on a hot surface.