

Play it Safe: Prevent Facial Injuries With Simple Sports Safety Precautions

Experts offer critical advice on protecting children and young adults from dental and facial injuries

Rosemont, IL (April 1, 2013) – April is National Facial Protection Month and the Academy for Sports Dentistry (ASD), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), and the American Dental Association (ADA) are teaming up to remind parents, coaches and athletes to play it safe as they prepare to suit up for recreational and organized sports.

The mouth and face of a child or young adult can be easily injured if the proper precautions are not used while participating in sports or recreational activities. In fact, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than half of the 7 million sports- and recreation-related injuries that occur each year are sustained by children as young as 5 years old. Last year, the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation (NYSSF) forecasted that more than 3 million teeth would be knocked out in youth sporting events. They also reported that athletes who don't wear mouth guards are 60 times more likely to damage their teeth. Yet, in a survey* commissioned by the AAO, 67% of parents admitted that their children do not wear a mouth guard during organized sports. This raises a question: if mouth guards offer a simple and relatively inexpensive solution to help dramatically decrease the risk of oral injuries, why aren't more kids wearing them?

The AAO survey* found that 84% of children do not wear mouth guards while playing organized sports because they are not required to wear them, even though they may be required to wear other protective materials, such as helmets and shoulder pads. At a time when a good football helmet or hockey stick may cost \$200 each, mouth guards can be one of the least expensive pieces of protective equipment available. Not only do mouth guards save teeth, they help protect jaws.

An effective mouth guard holds teeth in place, resists tearing and allows for normal speech and breathing. It should cover the teeth and, depending on the patient's bite, also the gums. Your dental professional can recommend the best mouth guard for every sports activity. A properly fitted mouth guard can prevent many accidents and traumatic injuries.

The dental experts at the ASD, AAPD, AAOMS, AAO and ADA urge athletes, parents/caregivers and coaches to be proactive as they head out this spring and stay safe on the field. The ASD, AAPD, AAOMS, AAO, and ADA dental experts offer these important tips:

- **Wear a mouth guard when playing contact sports.** Mouth guards can help prevent injury to a person's jaw, mouth and teeth and they are significantly less expensive than the cost to repair an injury. Dentists and dental specialists can make customized mouth guards, which provide the best fit. Other less-expensive options are the boil and bite mouthguards, which are softened in boiling water to fit the mouth, and stock mouth guards, which are ready-to-wear but often don't fit well.
- **Wear a helmet.** Helmets absorb the energy of an impact and help prevent damage to the head.
- **Wear protective eyewear.** Eyes are extremely vulnerable to damage, especially when playing sports.
- **Wear a face shield to avoid damage to the** delicate bones around the eyes, nose and jaw. Hockey pucks, basketballs and racquetballs can cause severe facial damage at any age.

About National Facial Protection Month

National Facial Protection Month is sponsored annually during the month of April by the Academy for Sports Dentistry (<http://www.academyforsportsdentistry.org/>), American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (www.aapd.org), American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (www.aaoms.org), American Association of Orthodontists (www.mylifemysmile.org) and the American Dental Association (www.mouthhealthy.org)

About the Academy for Sports Dentistry

The Academy for Sports Dentistry was founded in 1983 as a forum for dentists, physicians, trainers, coaches, dental technicians, and educators interested in exchanging ideas related to sports dentistry and the dental needs of athletes at risk to sports' injuries. The Academy is an organization dedicated to health and fitness through education, service and research pertaining to the prevention and treatment of sports-related orofacial injuries and diseases. Activities include the collection and dissemination of information on dental athletic injuries and the encouragement of research on the prevention of dental injuries to athletes. This organization exists to promote the advancement of research pertaining to sports dentistry; the utilization of this knowledge for the promotion of better approaches to the prevention and the treatment of athletic injuries and oral disease; and the improvement of communication and cooperation among all members of the health care community in order to share and utilize this knowledge for the benefit of the people. For more information, visit the Academy website at <http://www.academyforsportsdentistry.org/>.

About the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is the recognized authority on children's oral health. As advocates for children's oral health, the AAPD promotes evidence-based policies and clinical guidelines; educates and informs policymakers, parents and guardians, and other health care professionals; fosters research; and provides continuing professional education for pediatric dentists and general dentists who treat children. Founded in 1947, the AAPD is a not-for-profit professional membership association representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. Its 8,400 members provide primary care and comprehensive dental specialty treatments for infants, children, adolescents and individuals with special health care needs. For further information, please visit the AAPD website at <http://www.aapd.org> or the AAPD's consumer website at <http://www.mychildrensteeth.org>.

About the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

Saving Faces, Changing Lives[®] — The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS) is the professional organization representing more than 10,000 oral and maxillofacial surgeons, OMS residents and professional allied staff in the United States. AAOMS supports its fellows' and members' ability to practice their specialty through education, research and advocacy. AAOMS fellows and members comply with rigorous continuing education requirements and submit to periodic office anesthesia evaluations. For additional information about oral and maxillofacial surgery, visit the AAOMS website at <http://www.aaoms.org>.

About the American Association of Orthodontists

Founded in 1900, the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) is the world's oldest and largest dental specialty organization. It represents 17,000 orthodontist members throughout the United States, Canada and abroad. The AAO encourages and sponsors key research to enable its members to provide the highest quality of care to patients, and is committed to educating the public about the need for, and benefits of, orthodontic treatment.

Orthodontists are uniquely qualified specialists who diagnose, prevent and treat dental and facial irregularities to correctly align teeth and jaws. Orthodontists receive an additional two to three years of specialized education in orthodontics beyond dental school at an accredited orthodontic residency program. For more information, visit <http://www.mylifemysmile.org/>.

About the American Dental Association

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing 157,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly *The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA)* is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit www.ada.org. For more information on oral health, including prevention, care and treatment of dental disease, visit the ADA's consumer website www.MouthHealthy.org.

** The AAO commissioned Impulse Research Corp. to conduct the AAO 2009 Protective Sports Gear Survey. The survey was conducted in February 2009 online with a random sample of 1,022 men and women, ages 18 years old or older, from the U.S. Survey participants were carefully selected to closely match U.S. population demographics and the respondents are representative of American men and women 18 years old or older who have children between the ages of eight and 17, who participate in organized sports. The overall sampling error rate for this survey is +/- 3 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence.*

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