



## Mouthguards and Orofacial injuries

The prevention of orofacial injuries is desirable for obvious reasons. Such injuries can cause pain, affect appearance and may require costly and involved treatment.

Children between aged between six and twelve are most at risk with 41% of orofacial injuries occurring at home and 33% whilst playing sport. Prevention in the home is difficult making AWARENESS and education of paramount importance. For example, children should be alerted to the dangers of diving into swimming pools or swimming “blind” underwater. A little common sense goes a long way.

Prevention of orofacial injuries, particularly those to the teeth, is much simpler when playing sport. Wear a **MOUTHGUARD**. It is important to realize that many injuries occur in “non-contact sports”. Cricket balls, hockey sticks and surfboards can cause nasty orofacial injuries. The risk of injury is certainly greater in contact sports such as boxing, the various codes of football, basketball and NETBALL.

## Mouthguards

Because mouthguards provide protection against orofacial injuries, they contribute significantly to safety in sports. Testimony to this is seen in boxing and martial arts tournaments where Australian regulations make the use of mouthguards compulsory. All sports using mouthguards show a dramatic decrease in the number and severity of orofacial injuries.



Mouthguards were first worn by boxers at the turn of the century. These crude prototypes were made from a hollowed-out piece of rubber but had limited protection due to their poor fit.

Mouthguards improved greatly in the late 1950's after extensive studies in the USA. The user fitted and professionally fitted mouthguards were developed, the latter having superior qualities such as improved comfort and much better protection. Professionally fitted laminated mouthguards with additional design improvements have been introduced and they provide increased protection.

Mouthguards	Unfitted	User-fitted	Professionally Fitted
Fit	Very Poor	Fair	Excellent
Breathing	Severely Affected	Moderately Affected	Minimally Affected
Speech	Severely Affected	Moderately Affected	Minimally Affected
Protection	Poor	Fair	Very Good
Cost	Low	Low	Moderate

The top line **pressure formed** professional mouthguards come in different grades which are suited for different age groups and different sporting requirements. A large array of colour combinations is also available.

Mouthguards that cover upper and lower teeth (Bimaxillary mouthguards) can be made. These afford the best possible protection but are very costly and seem unnecessary for general use except where the sports person is missing most of their teeth.