



Mouth Guards for Sports Safety

Which type of sports mouth guard is best for you?

Beyond Contact Sports

Sports mouth guards are removable devices that are essential personal protective wear to prevent tooth injury while practicing sports. In addition to protecting one's teeth, wearing a mouth guard can help prevent concussions as it acts as a shock absorber. Mouth guards aren't only for full contact sports like football and boxing, in fact, the American Dental Association recommends a mouth guard for both full contact and non-contact sports, such as:

- Gymnastics
- Volleyball
- Acrobats
- Basketball
- Field hockey
- Handball
- Martial arts
- Shot-putting
- Skateboarding
- Soccer
- Skiing, Skydiving, Surfing, and etc.

There are three types of sports mouth guards:

- **Boil-and-bite mouth guards** - Boil-and-bite mouth guards are available at big-box stores or most large retail chain stores, including drug stores. The product comes in one size that involves boiling the product until the material is soft, then biting into it. The boil-and-bite mouth guard is an affordable approach to attaining a more custom fit, though may not fit as well as a custom made device made by a dentist.
- **Stock mouth guards** - Stock mouth guards are the most affordable type of mouth guards- also sold at big-box stores. They typically come in three sizes: small, medium, or large. While stock mouth guards are affordable, they've been reported to feel uncomfortable due to poor fit.
- **Custom mouth guards** - Custom mouth guards are the most expensive and by far the most protective and comfortable option; they are made up of a thermal plastic material and designed by the dentist. It requires two in-office appointments: impression and fitting. The dentist will take an impression of your teeth, send it to the lab, and have you come back for a fitting to ensure it fits snug. Custom mouth guard typically comes with a case for storage. Custom mouth guards are strongly recommended for athletes with braces due to wire and brackets.



Insurance Benefit for Mouth Guards

A loose fitting mouth guard can compromise protecting the teeth from sports injuries, like:

- Fracture
- Tooth intrusion/extrusion
- Avulsion

Review your dental benefit booklet for mouth guard benefits, exclusions, copay, and limitations. Discuss with your dentist if you have any questions or concerns regarding which mouth guard is the best option for you.

How to Clean and Store Mouth Guards

The mouth is an ideal condition for bacterial growth as it is warm, dark, and moist. Therefore, it is essential to keep the mouth guard clean to prolong its life; be sure to rinse after each use, before and after cleaning it. There are several methods to cleaning a mouth guard:

- Soap and water - Wet your mouth guard with water, apply a small amount of antibacterial soap, gently brush the mouth guard with a soft bristle toothbrush, rinse, and allow to air dry.
- Mouthwash - Remove debris from the mouth guard by rinsing it under water, soak your mouth guard in mouthwash for at least 30 minutes, rinse, and allow to air dry.
- Toothpaste - Apply a small amount of toothpaste on a soft bristle toothbrush and gently brush the mouth guard, rinse it under water, and allow to air dry.
- Ultrasonic cleaner - The high frequency of an ultrasonic cleaner removes food particle and debris. Follow the manufacturer's recommendation on how to use the product.
- Professional cleaning - You can bring your mouth guard with you to your dentist and have it cleaned at their office.

Bring your sports mouth guard with you to your regular check-up, your dentist will check the fit and determine if a new appliance is needed; a professional cleaning typically gets completed during this appointment, too.

The Case Counts, Too

Allowing the mouth guard to air dry before storing it in a durable and well ventilated container prevents bacteria from growing in the closed case. Additional steps should be taken to care for the case that holds the mouth guard when not in use:

- Clean the storage case with regular dish soap twice a week. This will ensure any bacteria lingering in the case is washed away, rather than re-contaminating a freshly cleaned mouth guard.
- Do not use the dishwasher as the high temperature can warp the shape.
- Keep the mouth guard and container away from high heat and direct sunlight.



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