

# Understanding the Real Importance of Mouth Guards

What would you do without some or all of your teeth? As you can imagine, talking, chewing, and even smiling would be a challenge! So, how do you protect your teeth? One great way to do so is with a mouth guard.

Unfortunately, not everyone who should wear a mouth guard actually does. Whether you're participating in a sport or grinding your teeth at night, a mouth guard could be critical. By learning more about them, you can make an informed decision as to whether to wear one.

## Key Benefits of Wearing a Mouth Guard

A mouth guard covers the teeth and prevents injuries from contact sports like basketball, football, soccer, wrestling, and also damage from teeth grinding. Key benefits include:

- 1. Protection Against Tooth Fractures, Displacement, and Loss** - If you play a sport, you're at an increased risk of tooth fractures, displacement, or loss depending upon how hard you're hit. A mouth guard can help minimize the impact, protecting your teeth and preventing costly dental repairs.
- 2. Protection Against Soft Tissue Injuries** - If you play a sport, you could easily injure your tongue or cheeks with your teeth by applying too much pressure. A mouth guard will keep you from biting too hard and protects vulnerable soft tissues.
- 3. Protection Against Jaw Fractures** - When you sustain a blow or pressure to your head, your teeth may knock together and, if the pressure is too great, it can result in a jaw fracture. A mouth guard can cushion the blow and potentially prevent an oral health disaster.
- 4. Protection Against Issues Caused by Teeth Grinding** - If you grind your teeth, you may experience popping and clicking of the jaw joint or even migraines due to spasms in the muscles around your jaw. Wearing a mouth guard at night will protect your teeth and jaw from grinding and clenching.

## Types of Mouth Guards

There are three primary types of mouth guards:



- **Stock Protectors** - These are an inexpensive solution and can be purchased at sporting goods stores and drugstores. Most stock protectors require the jaw to be closed to hold them in place and are bulky and ill-fitting.

- **Boil and Bite Protectors** - Also sold at most sporting goods stores and drugstores, boil and bite protectors are made from thermoplastic and can be shaped around teeth after being placed in hot water. These protectors are slightly more expensive than stock protectors, but are more effective.

- **Custom-Fitted Protectors** - These are available at dental offices and are far superior in terms of quality and the protection they offer. They are designed from exact models of your teeth, which ensures a comfortable and proper fit.

## **Prevention is Key to Maintaining Good Oral Health**

Good oral health begins with preventative measures including flossing daily, getting regular dental cleanings, and possibly wearing a mouth guard. Whether you play sports or grind your teeth at night, a mouth guard offers essential protection to keep your teeth safe and your smile looking great.