

## Should I wear a mouthguard?

In the interest of student safety all members of Spirit Taekwondo **MUST** acquire a mouth guard for their own protection. These mouth guards must be clear or white to enable easy detection of damage or injury. Students assume responsibility for the correct fitting, care and use of their mouth protection.

Failure to produce a mouth guard may result in class exclusion or participation at the students own risk.

### **The Fact's about Mouthguard's**

Every year thousands of children are treated for dental injuries, which could have been prevented, or the severity minimised, by wearing a protective mouthguard.

Anyone who participates in a sport that carries a risk of contact to the face should wear a mouthguard. This includes obvious sports such as football, boxing and rugby, and also collision sports where unexpected contact often happens. These include basketball, hockey, water polo, lacrosse, netball, baseball, softball, squash, soccer, BMX bike riding, horse riding, skateboarding, in-line skating, trampolining, cricket (wicket keeping or batting without a helmet), water skiing and snow ski racing. Why do you need a mouthguard? A mouthguard helps absorb the shock experienced by a blow to the face, which might otherwise result in an injury to the mouth or jaw. A heavy collision can result in chipped or broken teeth, internal damage to a tooth, tooth loss, injuries to the soft tissue of the mouth, and, in severe cases, concussion or a broken jaw. Injuries like these can lead to long and potentially expensive treatment to restore teeth and the mouth back to normal function and appearance. When should I wear a mouthguard? Mouthguards should be worn whilst playing and training for any sport that could involve contact to the face.

### **Mouthguards**

There are many types of mouthguards, from over-the-counter products to the professionally-fitted custom guard. The Australian Dental Association (ADA) recommends that self-fitted, over-the-counter mouthguards are inadequate and, for effective protection, a professionally-fitted custom mouthguard is essential. The lifetime cost of a dental injury justifies the expense of good protection to prevent the injury in the first place.

### **Custom-fitted mouthguards**

A custom-fitted mouthguard is made by a dentist using an impression taken of your teeth and a plaster model. Custom fitting allows the dentist to accurately assess your mouth and provide the best fit, size, coverage and thickness in a mouthguard made especially for you. The dentist can also make an assessment of any risk factors you might have and recommend the best type of mouthguard appropriate for your sport. Custom-fitted mouthguards are comfortable, allow you to talk, have maximum resistance against being dislodged and should not restrict breathing.

## **Over-the-counter mouthguards**

These mouthguards are cheaper than custom-fitted mouthguards. These include stock mouthguards that have no fitting at all, and boil and bite mouthguards that are self fitted by softening them in hot water, inserting them in the mouth and allowing them to adapt to the shape of the mouth as they cool and set. The ADA and Standards Australia do not recommend over the counter boil and bite mouthguards. They are poorly fitting and less comfortable to wear because they have not been specifically fitted to the shape of your mouth and teeth. This greatly lessens their effectiveness and can increase the risk of damage to teeth.

## **Is any sort of mouthguard better than none?**

A boil and bite mouthguard may be a short-term choice if there is absolutely no alternative available, but even with careful attention to the directions, the best result is a poorly fitting mouthguard that offers inadequate protection. Some studies place their degree of protection only slightly better than wearing no mouthguard at all.

## **How long will my mouthguard last?**

Your dentist should review your mouthguard every 12 months to ensure it fits correctly. Sometimes, a mouthguard needs to be replaced if major changes occur to the teeth, like restorations or adult teeth coming through.

## **How do I clean my mouthguard?**

Mouthguards need to be rinsed in cold water after use, dried and stored in a plastic container. Mouthguards can distort under higher temperatures, so they should be kept in a cool place. Wearing a custom-fitted mouthguard while participating in sport is vitally important to help prevent dental injuries.

## **What to do if a tooth is knocked out**

Every year accidents do occur and teeth are knocked out. This information explains what to do if this happens - how to best prepare the injury for treatment and how to reduce the likelihood of any long-term damage.

If a tooth is knocked out, remain calm and act quickly.

The following steps should be taken:

- Carefully find the tooth, handle it by the crown only (not the root) and ensure it is clean. The crown is the smooth white part of the tooth that is normally visible in the mouth.
- If the root is dirty, and the patient is calm and conscious, they can gently suck the tooth clean. Alternatively, rinse the tooth in milk or very briefly, in water.
- Immediately replant the tooth in the socket making sure the tooth is facing the right way around. Time is critical and immediate replacement is best, but should ideally not be delayed beyond 30 minutes.
- Hold the tooth in place. Aluminium foil may be used to help stabilise the tooth, or the patient can bite gently on gauze or a soft cloth.
- If you are unable to replant the tooth, keep it moist by putting it in a cup of milk, sealing it in plastic wrap or placing it in the patient's mouth next to the cheek, if the patient is able to do so.
- Seek immediate Dental Treatment - Time is Critical.

Points to remember: → Do not hold the tooth by the root surface.

- Do not scrape or rub the root surface.
- Do not let the tooth dry out.
- Do not put the tooth in ice.
- Avoid rinsing or storing the tooth in water for more than a one or two seconds.
- Do not remove any tissue or gum fragments from the tooth. Wearing a custom-fitted mouthguard while participating in sports will help protect against painful and potentially expensive dental injuries.