

SPORTS SENSE

A Consumer's Guide To Selecting The Right Mouth Guard

(NAPSA)—The American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) advocate the use of mouth guards for children and adults when cycling, in-line skating, skateboarding or playing any sport with the potential for facial injuries. Such sports include, but are not limited to, football, wrestling, basketball, baseball, volleyball, ice and field hockey, softball, and soccer.

The chart below offers assistance in deciding which type of mouth guard to purchase.

Type	Description	Pros	Cons
Custom-made	Dental professional makes impression of entire set of teeth, which may be sent to a lab for fabrication using heat-molded plastic.	Most protection & comfort. Covers all teeth, cushions jaw, reduces likelihood of concussions caused by blows to the chin. No interference with speech or breathing. Adjustable for difficult sports.	More expensive than commercially-made guards.
Mouth-formed, or "boil & bite"	Made of special rubber, model is boiled, cooled, then placed in patient's mouth to harden.	Most popular style. Low cost. Better fit than store-bought protectors.	Brittle after prolonged use.
Ready-to-wear, commercial mouth guards	Rubber or polyvinyl.	Sold in major department stores. Inexpensive.	Cannot be tested for comfort. Least effective in terms of protection. Stays in place only when mouth is closed.

The message orthodontists, oral and maxillofacial surgeons and pediatric dentists are emphasizing is to save face when playing sports. Protect yourself and loved ones from easily preventable injuries.

For further information about facial protection, or about the AAO, the AAOMS or the AAPD, visit the associations' Web sites at www.braces.org, www.aaoms.org or www.aapd.org.

