

# SPORTS SHORTS

## Protecting Child Athletes

(NAPSA)—Dentists say it's important for young athletes to protect their winning smiles by using mouthguards.

Studies show that for people under 18, sports-related injuries account for about one-third of all dental injuries and one-fifth of all head and face injuries. The right type of mouthguard can help protect kids from both types of problems. In fact, athletes who take a direct hit in the mouth area are 60 times more likely to suffer a serious injury that requires medical attention if they are not wearing a mouthguard than if they are.

The majority of documented oro-facial injuries occur in team sports such as baseball, basketball, soccer, softball or gymnastics. The injuries are among the most serious and expensive of all sport injuries, often requiring surgery and long-term recovery.

So how should parents and their athletes choose a mouthguard? Experts say to look for guards that offer maximum protection. For instance, Dental Concepts makes a guard called the XLR8™ that combines hard and soft materials to better absorb the force of an impact. In addition, XLR8 has side-impact “wings” that help guard against jaw injuries, a bottom teeth shield, long side panels to protect molars and a molded underside for additional protection.

The guard, which was designed specifically for athletes age 10 to



**Play Smart—A mouthguard can reduce an athlete's chances of certain injuries by 60 percent.**

18, has breathing channels for freer breathing and is visible when in use—that lets parents, coaches and officials more easily know if an athlete is wearing his or her mouthguard.

An additional—and perhaps unexpected—benefit of the mouthguard is that it can make kids stronger. The guard is designed to properly reposition the upper and lower jaw muscles. Bite strength correlation studies have shown that people who use the mouthpiece typically demonstrate an increase in isometric strength between 15 and 20 percent.

For more information visit [www.xlr8yourgame.com](http://www.xlr8yourgame.com) or call 1-866-866-6871.