

April is National
Facial Protection
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Month



News Release

April 1, 2008

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Don't let April be the cruelest month **Be kind to your face**

Don't let April be the cruelest month. As you suit up for outdoor fun this spring, don't forget to take care of your face. As oral and maxillofacial surgeons, pediatric dentists and orthodontists can attest, April often brings a flood of patients suffering mouth and facial injuries resulting from sports-related accidents.

Helmets Help

Whether you are riding a bicycle, scooter or motorcycle, or playing baseball, soccer or lacrosse, the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) and the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) urge you to wear a properly fitted helmet.. A well-fitted helmet should sit on top your head in a level position, covering the forehead. It should not rock back and forth or side to side. Pay attention to the chin strap. It should fit around your ear and under your chin comfortably. How well do helmets work? In baseball alone, it is estimated that batting helmets with face guards may prevent or reduce the severity of nearly 4,000 facial injuries.¹

Remember, a multi-sport helmet can be used for a variety of activities. Contact the [Snell Memorial Foundation](#), 916/331-5073 and the [American National Standards Institute](#), 212/642-4900 for additional information about helmet safety standards.

Mouthguards make a difference

According to the [National Youth Sports Safety Foundation](#), children, high school athletes and college athletes will lose more than five million teeth in sports-related accidents this year. Just by wearing a properly fitted mouthguard, many of these accidents and many other traumatic facial injuries could be prevented.

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Consider the facts – in football, where mouthguards **are** required, less than 1% of injuries involve the teeth and oral cavity. Compare this to basketball which **does not** require players to wear mouthguards. Nearly 35% of basketball-related injuries involve the teeth or oral cavity.²

The American Dental Association estimates more than 200,000 oral injuries are prevented annually by mouthguards. Unfortunately, estimates show that only 7% of school-age children who play baseball, softball or soccer wear mouthguards all or most of the time, and nearly 4,000 players require treatment by dentists each year.

An effective mouthguard holds teeth in place, resists tearing and allows for normal speech and breathing. Depending on your bite, it should cover either the upper or lower teeth as well as the gums.

Don't let an oral or facial injury sideline you

Be smart. Protect yourself and your loved ones from easily preventable oral and facial injuries by always wearing sports safety equipment like helmets and mouthguards. Your dental professionals care about your well-being and urge you to take the appropriate precautions when you head out this spring.

The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons and the American Association of Orthodontists encourage people to enjoy the pleasures of the season by using common sense and taking the necessary precautions to prevent sports injuries.

April can be the best time for enjoying all of the outdoor sports. But facial injuries can make it downright cruel. And in Elvis's immortal words, "Don't be cruel."

¹ US Consumer Product Safety Commission, Publication #329, Baseball Safety Fact Sheet

² Flanders RA, Bhat M: The incidence of orofacial injuries in sports: a pilot study in Illinois. Journal of the ADA 1995; 126-491-6.

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