



# April is National Facial Protection Month

## Team up with your colleagues to get the word out to your community

April is National Facial Protection Month (NFBM), and the Academy for Sports Dentistry (ASD), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) and the American Dental Association (ADA) are teaming up to remind parents, coaches and athletes to play it safe as young athletes prepare to suit up for recreational and organized sports.

Team up with your colleagues to get the word out to your community about NFBM and consistent wear of mouth guards and safety equipment!

Every year, dentists and dental specialists are called to hospital emergency rooms to treat children who have sustained knocked out teeth, broken jaws and other facial injuries during organized or neighborhood sports activities. For most of these children, these injuries could have been less severe or prevented entirely if they had worn a mouth guard, helmet or other protective headgear.

**When kids don't wear mouth guards or protective headgear in sports activities, it's usually because parents and coaches are unaware of their importance.** Many parents have limited sports backgrounds and don't realize the potential for serious injury in an impromptu neighborhood game of basketball or baseball, or a simple bike ride.

Although mouth guards are now generally considered standard equipment for football and hockey players, they really should be worn during any contact sport. "Contact sport" is not limited to one player knocking into another, but encompasses any sport in which the player is likely to have his or her face come into contact with the pavement or other hard object. Kids who participate in soccer, extreme sports (BMX biking, skateboarding and in-line skating) and other common sports should wear a mouth guard and other protective helmets and equipment to protect them from injury.

## What can you do?

Have a voice in your community! Raise awareness of the importance of wearing mouth guards. As a dental professional, yours is a respected voice in the community. There are many things you can do to raise awareness about sports safety and the important role mouth guards and other safety gear play. You'll be doing kids, parents and coaches an important service, and you'll be promoting the profession, too!

Below is a list of ways to educate patients, parents, and community members about the importance of mouth guards and protective gear during National Facial Protection Month, **while also promoting your expertise and practice.**

## E-mail your patients

Send a simple email to your patient base with a list of tips to stay safe on the field. Suggested copy follows:

Dear **(Patient or Parent)**,

April is National Facial Protection Month. As we return to outdoor sports and other activities, April is an appropriate time to remind you about the importance of taking a few precautions to preserve your teeth and be protected from facial injuries, whether at a practice, at a game, or simply enjoying some fun in the neighborhood. How can you play it safe?

- **Wear a helmet.** Helmets absorb the energy of an impact and help prevent damage to one's head.
- **Wear protective eyewear.** Eyes are extremely vulnerable to damage, especially when playing sports.
- **Wear a face shield to avoid scratched or bruised skin.** Hockey pucks, basketballs, and racquetballs can cause severe facial damage at any age.
- **Wear a mouth guard when playing contact sports.** Mouth guards can help prevent injury to a person's jaw, mouth and teeth; and they are significantly less expensive than the cost to repair an injury.

A custom mouth guard offers the best protection.

April is the perfect time to get into the mouth guard habit. Wear one at every practice and every game.

Sincerely,

**Firstname Lastname, degree(s)**

## Hang a poster in your office

Posters in various sizes are available for download at <http://www.AAOMS.org/SaveFace>

## Create an in-office display (In addition to, or as an alternative to hanging the poster)

Showcase different colors, shapes, and flavors of custom and/or over-the-counter mouth guards. Print out copies of the handout "[When Do You Need a Mouth Guard](#)" and leave them by your display so that patients and parents can help themselves.

## Host a Community Education Night

Give a presentation in your office for parents or coaches, or offer to give a presentation at a local school, YMCA, YWCA, JCCA, Boys & Girls Club, local athletic associations, youth organizations, and gyms/workout venues. Team up with your colleagues from the AAOMS, AAO, AAPD and/or ASD. You can also coordinate with local schools to set up a table or booth at youth sporting events to meet with parents, distribute NFPM materials, and answer questions.

## Let your local media and school newsletters know

Send a news release or short paragraph (see below) to local newspapers, school newspapers, community newsletters, TV stations and radio stations to raise awareness and encourage action. Your outreach may even prompt the local media to ask for an interview.

April is National Facial Protection Month, and **[INSERT DOCTOR OR PRACTICE NAME]** wants to remind parents, coaches and athletes to play it safe as they prepare to suit up for recreational and organized sports. A child's mouth and face can be easily injured if the proper precautions are not used while playing sports. In fact, according to the Center for Disease Control, more than half of the 7 million sports- and recreation-related injuries that occur each year are sustained by youth as young as 5 years old. Last year, the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation forecasted that more than 3 million teeth would be knocked out in youth sporting events – yet, in a survey commissioned by the American Association of Orthodontists, 67% of parents admit that their child does not wear a mouth guard during organized sports. This raises a question: if mouth guards offer a simple and relatively inexpensive solution to help dramatically decrease the risk of oral and facial injuries, why aren't more kids wearing them? Parents are encouraged to talk with their dental professionals about the right mouth guards for their young athletes, and to urge coaches to require that young athletes wear their mouth guards at every practice and every game.

Send local media and school newsletters the "[Consumer Guide to Mouth Guards](#)" PDF available for download at <http://www.AAOMS.org/SaveFace>

## Key Messages for a Media Interview

As an authority, you may be called upon by local media to give a brief interview on the topic of NFPM. Below are some key messages to communicate to the reporter and, ultimately, people in your community.

- As a member of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, I want to help make sure my patients and their teammates are properly protected from sports-related injuries to teeth, mouth and face.
  - Simple and relatively inexpensive protective sports gear – such as mouth guards – can make a big difference in reducing or preventing oral injuries
- In a recent survey, the American Association of Orthodontists found that 70 percent of parents said their biggest fear is that their child will get hurt while playing organized sports, yet 67 percent admitted that their child does NOT wear a mouth guard during organized sports including football, basketball, soccer and lacrosse.
- Consistent use of other protective equipment is important, too.
  - Mandated for many organized sports, helmets save lives and prevent head injuries.
  - Face guards, devices made of plastic or metal that attach to baseball helmets, also help to prevent facial injuries.

- Because oral and maxillofacial surgeons help kids and adults obtain healthy, beautiful faces and smiles, the last thing they want to see is a patient get injured because they weren't properly equipped.
- If an accident occurs, causing facial injury, you should go to the emergency room. If there's any dental damage done, contact your dentist or oral and maxillofacial surgeon so that arrangements can be made to correct the problem.
- If a child has braces they should always wear a mouth guard. Serious trauma can occur to the lips and gums if they are hit in the mouth with a ball or stick without the proper protection.
- To prevent facial injuries **remember these four important tips:**
  1. **Wear mouth guards** for contact sports to help prevent injuries to the teeth and mouth.
  2. **Wear a helmet.** Helmets absorb the energy of an impact.
  3. **Wear protective eyewear.** Eyes are extremely vulnerable.
  4. **Be alert even as a spectator.** Alert spectators can avoid foul baseballs and flying hockey pucks. Watch your step when climbing bleachers.
- For more information and tips about mouth guards and facial protection visit [AAOMS.org/SaveFace](http://AAOMS.org/SaveFace)

## Send a Letter to the Editor

Raise awareness of National Facial Protection Month in your community by sending a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.

For an even bigger impact, invite your colleagues from the other sponsoring organizations to add their signatures—or ask that your local dental society sign and send it.

Suggested copy follows.

April is National Facial Protection Month—a time when members of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, the American Association of Orthodontists, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the Academy for Sports Dentistry remind parents to make sure their young athletes play it safe and wear a mouth guard and other appropriate safety gear at every practice and every game.

Members of these organizations are frequently called to the emergency room to attend to a young athlete's dental or facial injury. Yes, accidents can happen. But many accidents can be prevented by the simple act of wearing a mouth guard and other protective gear.

Parents and coaches are urged to make sure that mouth guards and safety gear are a consistent part of young athletes' uniforms.

A mouth guard is a smart investment. Its cost is a fraction of the costs associated with emergency care of a broken or knocked-out tooth. Such costs can reach the tens of thousands of dollars over a lifetime.

Protect that precious smile. Talk to your dental professional about a mouth guard.

## Sponsor a contest

*Please note: **Due to rules and regulations, contests cannot be hosted on Facebook or Twitter without paying a substantial fee.** If sponsoring a contest, promote via your practice Web site, in your office newsletter or via e-mail.*

Sponsor an essay contest, "The Importance of Wearing a Mouth Guard," among your patients, or invite classes at local schools to participate. Announce the contest on your Web site, and send out an e-mail or letter to patients/parents to submit an entry. Offer prizes. Notify local media about the contest through a press release and invite the public to visit your Web site to vote for their favorite essay. Publish the winning essay on your practice site (keeping HIPAA guidelines in mind).

## Adopt a School, a School District or a Community

Sponsor an event to provide free mouth guards to youngsters at a local school, a local school district or an entire community—you set the parameters. Be sure to alert your local media. Here's a sample media alert. Send it to media outlets the week before, the day before, and the day of the event.

**For more information, contact:**

**Office contact name, area code & office phone number  
e-mail address**

**After-hours number**

## MEDIA ALERT

### DR. [LASTNAME] PROVIDES FREE MOUTH GUARDS TO YOUNG ATHLETES

**WHO:** Dr. **Firstname Lastname**  
**WHAT:** Provides free, custom-fitted mouth guards to students of **(school name, school district, community)**  
**WHEN:** **Day of the week, Date, Time**  
**WHERE:** **Give location, and simple directions, if applicable**

**BACKGROUND:**

Dr. [Lastname] believes in preventing sports injuries. He/She will create custom-fitted mouth guards for students from **(school name, school district, community)** to underscore his/her determination to keep students' smiles intact.

Dr. [Lastname] has been practicing oral and maxillofacial surgery for **##** years. **He/She** graduated from **University Name** School of Dentistry and completed an additional **##** years, advanced training program, at **University Name**.

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## Distribute Materials

A number of informative materials can be distributed to patients, parents and the public at your office, at speaking engagements, health fairs, local libraries on your practice Web site and through your social media pages.

**The following resources are available for download at [AAOMS.org/SaveFace](http://AAOMS.org/SaveFace)**

“When Do You Need a Mouth Guard?” handout

“Consumer Guide to Mouthguards” handout

Facial Injury First Aid Card

National Facial Protection Month poster

Small - 8.5" x 11"

Medium - 11" x 17"

Large - 22" x 34"

“Do It Right” poster

Small – 8.5" x 11"

Medium – 11" x 17"

“Protect Yourself” poster

Small – 8.5" x 11"

Medium – 11" x 17"

“Think Again” poster

Small – 8.5" x 11"

Medium – 11" x 17"

CDC Color Me Safe coloring book English

CDC Color Me Safe coloring book Spanish

CDC Concussion in Youth Sports Fact Sheet for Parents

CDC Concussion in Youth Sports Fact Sheet for Athletes

CDC Concussion in Youth Sports Fact Sheet for Coaches

CDC Parent-Athlete Concussion Information Sheet

CDC Facts About Concussion and Brain Injury

CDC Sports Injury Fact Sheet English

CDC Sports Injury Fact Sheet Spanish

**The AAOMS *Treating and Preventing Facial Injuries* Patient Information Pamphlets are also available for purchase at <http://www.aomsstore.com>**

## Post on Your Web site, Social Media Outlets

Once or twice a week throughout April, add content about National Facial Protection Month to your Web site, blog, Facebook, Twitter or other social media outlets. Here are some suggestions:

1.

Q When is the right time to wear a mouth guard?

A Any time you play sports!

2.

If you will be appearing at a speaking engagement that is open to the public, invite your audience to attend.

3.

If you will be taking part in a health fair, post the location, day and time of the event and invite your audience to attend.

4.

If you will be offering free mouth guards to a selected school, school district or community, post the location, day and time of the event and invite your audience to attend.

5.

Post statistics regarding injuries contained in the news release template. For example, "According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than half of the 7 million sports- and recreation-related injuries that occur each year are sustained by youth as young as age 5." Or, "Last year the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation estimated that more than 3 million teeth would be knocked out in youth sporting events." Remind your audience that such accidents can be prevented by wearing a mouth guard.

6.

The National Youth Sports Safety Foundation says that athletes who do not wear mouth guards are 60 times more likely to sustain damage to their teeth. Protect your child's precious smile with a mouth guard.

7.

The American Dental Association estimates that mouth guards prevent more than 200,000 oral injuries each year. Make sure your child's teeth are protected with a mouth guard!

8.

Link to the Centers for Disease Control Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/>.

9.

Post the "[Consumer Guide to Mouth Guards](#)" PDF

10.

Link to patient education information on the AAOMS Web site at <http://myoms.org/procedures/treatment-of-facial-injury>

# AAOMS.org/SaveFace