

Smiles Better!

with **Dr. Nuala Devlin**
Causeway Dental
Practice, Ballymoney



KNOCK-OUT performance!

Imagine what it would be like if you suddenly lost one or two of your front teeth from a sporting accident. Smiling, talking, eating.... everything would suddenly be affected.

Mouthguards help cushion a blow to the face, minimizing the risk of broken teeth and injuries to your lips, tongue, face or jaw. They typically cover the upper teeth and are a great way to protect the soft tissues of your tongue, lips and cheek lining. Knowing how to prevent injuries like these is especially important if you participate in organised sports or other recreational activities.

A mouthguard is an essential piece of athletic gear that should be part of your standard equipment from an early age. In fact, studies show that athletes are 60 times more likely to suffer harm to the teeth if they're not wearing a mouthguard. While collision and contact sports, such as boxing, are higher-risk sports for the mouth, you can experience a dental injury in non-contact activities too, such as gymnastics and skating.

There are three types of mouthguards:

- Custom-fitted. These are made by your dentist for you personally. They are more expensive than the other versions, but because they are customised, usually offer the best fit.
- Stock. These are inexpensive and come pre-formed, ready to wear. Unfortunately, they often don't fit very well. They can be bulky and can make breathing and talking difficult.
- Boil and bite. These mouth protectors can be bought at many sporting goods stores and Pharmacies and may offer a better fit than stock mouth protectors. They are first softened in water (boiled), then inserted and allowed to adapt to the shape of your mouth.

The best mouthguard is one that has been custom made for your mouth by your dentist. However, if you can't afford a custom-fitted mouthguard, you should still wear a stock mouthguard or a boil-and-bite mouthguard from



the Pharmacy. If you wear braces or another fixed dental appliance, your dentist may suggest a mouth protector such as Oproshield which is a self-fit mouthguard.

A mouthguard is especially important for people who wear braces or have fixed bridge work. A blow to the face could damage the brackets or other fixed orthodontic appliances. A mouthguard also provides a barrier between the braces and your cheek or lips, limiting the risk of soft tissue injuries.

If you have a retainer or other removable appliance, do not wear it during any contact sports.

Some tips for caring for your mouthguard:

rinse before and after each use or brush with a toothbrush and toothpaste occasionally clean the mouthguard in cool, soapy water and rinse thoroughly transport the mouthguard in a sturdy container that has vents never leave the mouthguard in the sun or in hot water check for wear and tear to see if it needs replacing

Causeway dental are currently fitting Ballymoney rugby club with their mouthguard's for the season ahead. For all of you getting the kids ready for school remember to put a sports mouthguard on your list, in most schools it is now compulsory that they are worn for contact sports such as Rugby, Gaelic football, Hockey and Camogie.

For further information please contact us on 02827663808. Nuala