

Play It Safe! Wear a Mouthguard.



Many sports injuries can be prevented by wearing appropriate protective gear. April is National Facial Protection Month and Ridgefield orthodontist Dr. Blaine Langberg, a member of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), wants to remind athletes, their parents and coaches to play it safe by wearing mouth guards and appropriate protective gear when participating in sports and recreational activities that could cause injuries.

Mouth guards are one of the least expensive pieces of protective equipment available. Over-the-counter versions cost as little as \$5. Not only do mouth guards save teeth and protect jaws from breaks, Dr. Langberg notes that mouth guards may also protect against neck injuries and central nervous system injuries by decreasing the force transmitted through the jaw to the base of the skull. Mouth guards can only provide protection when they are worn, so Dr. Langberg advises parents and coaches to remind youngsters to always use a mouth guard when participating in any activity during which the mouth could come into contact with a hard object, another player, the pavement, ground or turf field.

For athletes wearing braces, a mouth guard also can protect the braces from breakage caused by impact and provide protection from lacerations that may occur as a result of impact that causes the metal brackets to come into contact with soft tissue. The result can be painful and cause damage to the braces.

"Athletes who wear braces should consult their orthodontist for a recommendation of the best mouth guard to wear during orthodontic treatment," said Dr. Langberg. Not all over-the-counter mouth guards accommodate braces. Dr. Langberg and his team regularly research mouth guard solutions for athletes with braces to find the best options available.

Consistent use of other protective equipment is important too. Helmets save lives and prevent head injuries. They should be worn for activities such as bicycling, skateboarding, skating and snow sports, to name a few. Helmet wear is mandated for many organized sports. "Helmets should be worn for any activity that puts the head at risk,"

Dr. Langberg said. Face guards, devices made of plastic or metal that attach to baseball helmets, help to prevent facial injuries as well.

In the event of a dental injury, Dr. Langberg offers these tips:
Broken tooth

- Clean the injured area and apply ice.
- Save the tip of the tooth (for possible reattachment) and call your dentist right away.
- Store the tooth fragment in milk, if available, or water.

Knocked out tooth

- Locate the tooth; hold it by the crown (the wide part, not the pointed end/root).
- AVOID RUBBING THE ROOT OR TOUCHING IT.
- Rinse the tooth ONLY if there is a need to remove debris.
- Put the tooth back in its socket; cover with gauze or tissue and bite down to stabilize it or briefly store the tooth in cold milk or salt water, or between the cheek and gum.
- Do not let the tooth dry out. A tooth may be saved if cared for properly and reimplanted within an hour.
- See your dentist immediately.

National Facial Protection Month is sponsored annually by the AAO, the oldest and largest dental specialty organization in the world. Dr. Langberg is the only board certified orthodontist in Ridgefield. He provides orthodontic treatment to both adults and children. In addition to traditional braces, Dr. Langberg is an Invisalign and invisible Incognito orthodontic braces provider. For more information about Dr. Langberg and his team visit www.braceyourselves.com. To schedule a complimentary consultation, call the office at 203-431-4466.