

Don't Forget Your Mouthguard!

Courtesy of Lynse Briney, DDS, MS;
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Spring is upon us and the kids are gearing up for their spring sports season! You've scrambled to get equipment together – helmets, shin guards and shoulder pads. But you wouldn't have them play baseball, soccer or football without their protective gear, right?

For dentists, it's also obvious you'd want to protect them from a fastball straight to the teeth on the baseball field, or a fierce elbow to the jaw on the basketball court. And dentists agree, the best way to protect them is with a well-fitted mouthguard. April is National Facial Protection Month, focusing on the important role of mouthguards, helmets and face guards in preventing oral and facial sports related injuries.

Three million teeth get knocked out each year in youth sports, and athletes are 60 times more likely to experience tooth injuries without a mouthguard. Yet 67% of child athletes don't wear one. It's important to remember that the smallest piece of sports equipment may be the most essential to safeguarding that smile.

The right mouthguard can protect teeth, the tongue, jaw, and the entire mouth from injury during sports and play. They have even been shown to help prevent concussions resulting from head trauma. It is no surprise that professional athletes in virtually every sport have increasingly adopted mouthguards as part of their practice and game routine.



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Repairing broken teeth or jaws, or replacing missing teeth with dental implants, can not only take months to heal, but can also cost thousands of dollars.

Compared to the pain, time and expense of treating sports injuries, a properly fitted athletic mouthguard is a low-cost investment in your child's overall health. And it can last from a few months to a year, depending on the child's age and how fast their teeth grow.

There are three main types of mouthguards:

- **Stock mouthguards:** pre-formed and may result in a bulky fit.
- **Boil-and-bite mouthguards:** made by softening in boiling water and placed in the mouth to shape. Tends to have a better fit than stock mouthguards.
- **Custom-fit mouthguards:** made by a dentist, these guards stay put, and are easier to breathe, talk and drink water while wearing.

Our dental office can work with your child to design the best mouthguard for their situation, even if they have braces or are missing some teeth. We know that mouthguards can protect your child's teeth and help them be their brightest self — both on and off the sports field.

We offer a full range of pediatric dental services to help every one of our patients discover their healthiest and brightest smile.

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Dr. Lynse Briney is a Diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry, and a proud member of the American Dental Association, Illinois State Dental Society and Chicago Dental Society.

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