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Dentists recommend you get a custom-fitted mouthguard for protection in all sports.

CUSTOM-FITTED MODELS RECOMMENDED OVER STORE-BOUGHT

Mouthguard nearly chokes Stouffville hockey player

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Looking for a mouthguard?

It doesn't pay to go the inexpensive route, as a Stouffville minor hockey player learned, the hard way.

The use of a non-custom, store-bought guard almost caused serious injury to the minor midget Clipper player.

During an Ontario Minor Hockey Association playoff tilt, the player was clipped by a high stick as he attempted to check an opponent. The impact caused the player to partially swallow his mouth guard.

He skated to the bench where Clippers' assistant coach Bill Crago performed a Heimlich manoeuvre.

Mr. Crago was able to expel the guard from the player's throat, where it had been blocking his air passage.

The guard was the type you cut and place in boiling water to fit.

DENTIST/ATHLETE

It had been cut extensively after being chewed on for the better part of a season, too, head coach Don Easter said.

In that condition, the devices fail to provide much protection, Easter said.

"It was now in a form where it could and almost did choke the player," he said.

While this incident might be deemed a freak occurrence, Easter feels that during the course of a long season, players should check the condition of their mouth guards.

Bob Boadway, a long-time Stouffville dentist and weekend athlete, said such incidents are a rarity.

"How he almost swallowed it I'll never know," Mr. Boadway said.

As a dentist who also makes custom-fit mouthguards for his patients, Dr. Boadway suggested the prescribed route for an athlete to take if they wish to

Look after your guard so it can protect you

Caring for your mouthguard will help it take care of your teeth longer, the Ontario Dental Association says.

Take a few moments to:

- Rinse your mouthguard under cold water after each use and air-dry. Occasionally clean it with mild soap and water or mouth-wash.

- Store your mouthguard in a plastic container when not in use to avoid damage due to excessive heat and cold.

- Wear your mouthguard properly. Do not cut or alter it and do not chew on it.

- Check your mouthguard regularly and let your dentist know if it shows any signs of wear, or has any tears or cracks that may weaken it. If the bite has changed and the mouthguard no longer fits well, it can sometimes be adjusted by the dentist.

- youroralhealth.ca

and over can use them for a couple of years before purchasing a new one since their teeth have stopped growing, he said.

"The primary benefit of mouthguards is in the protection of teeth and gums from serious injury," says Dr. Ian McConnachie, a pediatric dentist and former president of the Ontario Dental Association. "Mouthguards have also been cited as an additional prevention of concussions and other serious injuries where the lower teeth and jaw are forced up against the upper teeth and jaw. The evidence for this prevention is not as strong."

Who should wear a mouthguard?

All athletes, all ages, the ODA says. Any sport with a strong chance for contact with other participants or hard surfaces requires mouth protection, it says.

CONCUSSION PREVENTION?

Players who participate in basketball, baseball, soccer, wrestling, squash, racquetball, lacrosse, rugby, in-line skating and martial arts, or even recreational sports such as skateboarding and bicycling, should wear mouthguards when practising or competing.

What are the factors that affect the fit of a mouthguard?

"A dentist will consider a number of factors when fitting a patient for a mouthguard," says Dr. McConnachie. "Size of mouth, bite, type of sport played and whether or not the patient wears braces or other appliances are all important considerations. Each patient's very specific needs must be addressed for maximum comfort and protection."

Many athletes resist wearing a mouthguard because of bulkiness and poor fit. Custom-made mouthguards are the most comfortable, non-bulky and form-fitting. This leads to increased use and fewer injuries, he said.

purchase one is to get them from their dentist.

"They fit tighter," he said of custom-fitted devices. "You almost have to use your fingernails to get them out."

Dr. Boadway also said custom fit pieces cost about the same as those models purchased from a sporting good store. Dr. Boadway charges around \$30 for custom guards.

Regardless if they are store-bought or custom-fitted models, Dr. Boadway warned they must be checked periodically.

Youngsters up to 18 years of age should purchase a new one every year, he said.

Athletes 18 years of age

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