

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April is National Facial Protection Month Play It Smart the First Time – Wear Protective Gear and Prevent Injuries

Rosemont, Illinois, April 25, 2018 – Some dental and facial injuries sustained in sports activities are preventable. April is National Facial Protection Month (NFPM) and five dental organizations have joined forces to educate the public to play it smart the first time by wearing mouth guards and other protective gear to prevent injuries.

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) co-sponsor NFPM annually to encourage parents, caregivers and coaches to prevent sports-related injuries to the head and face by using safety equipment. Athletes are urged to wear protective gear such as mouth guards and helmets to avoid being sidelined by an injury.

John D. is a case in point. He went to baseball practice without a mouth guard, where a baseball hit him directly in the mouth. The force pushed his two front teeth backwards, broke the bone in the roof of the mouth (palate) and led to an emergency room visit.

His orthodontist, Jacqueline Miller, DDS, MS, a member of the AAO in Washington, Missouri, repositioned his palate and teeth.

“But had he been wearing a mouth guard, he would likely have had less trauma, and probably would not have broken his palate,” Dr. Miller said.

A mouth guard is one of the most inexpensive pieces of protective gear available to young athletes, especially when compared to the high cost of restoring a knocked out or broken tooth. According to a 2017 study commissioned by the AAO, among 1,000 U.S. parents whose children play in organized sports, parents estimated it would cost \$1,142 to replace a damaged permanent tooth. In reality, costs to treat one knocked-out tooth over a lifetime can range from \$5,000 to \$20,000, according to an article in [Sports Health](#). Parents and patients may not realize that restorations may have to be repeated periodically, which amplifies costs.

Many parents agree that mouth guards should be required to play. In fact, 99 percent of parents who took part in the AAO study concurred. Yet 37 percent of these parents admitted their child never wears a mouth guard while playing sports. This includes games, practices and recreational play.

John D. wears a mouth guard now, Dr. Miller noted. “In fact, pretty much everyone I have treated for trauma to their mouths wear mouth guards – after the fact. I have put teeth back in from accidents in soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, cheerleading, track, trampoline, bike riding and gymnastics. From my perspective, mouth guards should be required for any sport where there is

the potential for contact with the mouth. It’s worth noting that I have never had to treat a dental injury from organized football – that’s because mouth guards are mandated,” she observed.

Dentists and dental specialists can provide customized mouth guards that protect the teeth but also allow for normal speech and breathing. While a dentist-made mouth guard will have a more tailored fit and provide the best protection, there are also commercially available mouth guards that are less expensive and can be purchased from local or online merchants. According to the five dental organizations, mouth protection should be fitted, light, strong, easy-to-clean and the correct size so it covers the gums and teeth. Athletes in orthodontic treatment should consult their orthodontist about the type of mouth guard to use.

Visit the co-sponsor websites linked below for more information and resources:

- Established in 1918, the [American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons](#) represents more than 9,000 oral and maxillofacial surgeons and supports its fellows and members through education, research and advocacy.
- The [American Association of Orthodontists](#), founded in 1900, is the world’s oldest and largest dental specialty organization. Its more than 19,000 orthodontist members help patients of all ages achieve healthy, beautiful smiles.
- Founded in 1947, the [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#) is the membership organization of the specialty of pediatric dentistry with 10,000 members.
- The [Academy for Sports Dentistry](#) was established in 1983 as a forum for dentists, doctors, athletic trainers, coaches, dental technicians and educators for sharing ideas about sports dentistry and athletes’ dental needs.
- The [American Dental Association](#), founded in 1859, is the country’s largest dental association, representing more than 161,000 dentist members.

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About National Facial Protection Month

National Facial Protection Month is sponsored annually during the month of April by the [American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons](#), the [American Association of Orthodontists](#), the [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#), the [Academy for Sports Dentistry](#) and the [American Dental Association](#). Visit the websites for more information and helpful materials.

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