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# Mouthguard Myths

Houston – (January 21, 2013) – After every play, we all see the athletes adjusting their mouthguards, but what do they actually protect? Houston Methodist sports medicine experts discuss important facts about mouthguards.

Can wearing a mouthguard prevent a concussion?

“No, mouthguards cannot prevent a concussion,” said Dr. Vijay Jotwani, a sports medicine-focused primary care physician with [Houston Methodist Orthopedics & Sports Medicine](http://www.methodistorthopedics.com/methodist-orthopedics-and-sports-medicine). “Mouthguards do not affect the movement of the brain within the skull and cerebrospinal fluid, so they are ineffective at reducing the forces on the brain that cause concussions.”

Can wearing a mouthguard protect my teeth and jaw?

While a mouthguard cannot protect the brain, it can dissipate the force of an impact over several teeth rather than just a few.

“Several studies have confirmed that mouthguards help prevent dental trauma,” said Dr. Jamie Gateno, a Houston Methodist oral and maxillofacial surgeon. “A mouthguard should fit the teeth snugly and be made of a non-compressible material to help protect the teeth and jaw.”

Gateno adds that dental trauma usually occurs along with other injuries, such as lacerations, contusions, and fractures. He recommends that a patient be transported to a hospital capable of treating all injuries. If a tooth is dislodged, it should be gently washed and placed back in its socket within 20 minutes. If the tooth cannot be implanted back in the socket, Gateno says the tooth should be placed in a cup of milk during transportation to a hospital or dentist’s office. If milk is not available, he recommends having the patient place the tooth between their gum and cheek to protect the tooth during transportation.

Which type of mouthguard – ready-made, boil-and-bite, or customized – provides the most protection?

Jotwani and Gateno agree that a customized mouthguard is the best option for athletes in contact and collision sports, such as baseball, basketball, football, hockey and lacrosse.

“The ready-made mouthguards provide the least amount of protection because they do not properly fit the athlete’s mouth,” said Gateno. “A customized fit is essential to dissipating the force of an impact.”

If cost is a factor, Jotwani said the boil-and-bite mouthguard is the next best option.

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