

Policy on Prevention of Sports-related Orofacial Injuries

Originating Committee
Clinical Affairs Committee

Review Council
Council on Clinical Affairs

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1991

Revised
1995, 1999, 2002

Purpose

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is concerned about the prevalence of sports-related injuries in our nation's youth. Increased competitiveness has resulted in an alarming number of dental and facial injuries which, combined, represent a high percentage of the total injuries experienced in youth sports.^{1,2}

Background

All sporting activities have an associated risk of orofacial injuries due to falls, collisions, and contact with hard surfaces. The administrators of youth, high school, and college football, lacrosse, and ice hockey have demonstrated that dental and facial injuries can be reduced significantly by introducing mandatory protective equipment. Popular sports such as baseball, basketball, soccer, field hockey, softball, wrestling, volleyball, and gymnastics lag far behind in injury protection for girls and boys. Youths participating in leisure activities such as skateboarding, inline or roller skating, and bicycling also benefit from appropriate protective equipment.^{3,4}

Mouthguards help distribute the forces of impact, thereby reducing risk of severe orofacial injury and concussion.⁵ Any mouthguard that is used will be effective only if it is fitted properly and worn properly.⁵

Three types of mouthguards are available: stock or preformed (ready-to-wear), mouth formed, and custom fitted (made on a cast from an oral impression taken by a qualified health professional). Without question, the custom-fitted appliance is most protective and is also the preference of surveyed athletes. When this is not available, the mouth-formed mouthguard is preferable to the stock or preformed mouthguard.⁶⁻⁸

Policy statement

The AAPD recommends:

- dentists play an active role in educating the public in the use of protective equipment for sporting activities, both organized and informal, not only to prevent injuries but also to reduce health care costs;
- continuation of preventive practices instituted in youth, high school and college football, lacrosse and ice hockey;
- for youth participating in organized baseball and softball activities, an American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM)-certified face protector be required (according to the playing rules of the sport);
- mandating the use of properly fitted mouthguards in other organized sporting activities with risk of orofacial injury;
- prior to initiating practices for a sporting season, coaches/administrators of organized sports consult a dentist with expertise in orofacial injuries for recommendations for immediate management of sports-related injuries (eg, avulsed teeth);
- continuation of research in development of a comfortable, efficacious, and cost-effective sports mouthguard to facilitate more widespread use of this proven protective device;
- the International Academy of Sports Dentistry be recognized as a valuable resource for the professions and public.

References

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