



## **POSITION STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOUTHGUARD USE IN SPORTS**

**National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)  
Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC)**

The NFHS mandates the use of mouthguards in football, field hockey, ice hockey, lacrosse and wrestling (for wrestlers wearing braces). Multiple studies by the American Dental Association, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, and the American Academy for Sports Dentistry have shown a significant reduction of orofacial injuries with the use of a properly fitted mouthguard. The Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) of the NFHS recommends that athletes consider the use of a properly fitted, unaltered mouthguard for participation in any sport that has the potential for orofacial injury from body or playing apparatus (stick, bat, ball, etc) contact. Research currently does not support the theory that the use of a mouthguard minimizes the risk or severity of a concussion.

A properly fitted mouthguard should separate the biting surfaces of the teeth, protect the lips, gums and teeth, and fully cover all of the upper teeth. Mouthguards which cover the lower, rather than the upper, teeth are preferred if the lower row of teeth protrudes farther out (are the leading edge) than the upper teeth. It is strongly recommended that mouthguards be properly fitted and not be altered in any manner which decreases the effective protection. Proper fit is insured by: (1) being constructed from a model made from an impression of the individual's teeth or (2) being constructed and fitted to the individual by impressing the teeth into the mouthguard itself.

A properly fitted and unaltered mouthguard has been shown to not impede communication, breathing, or create any hazards to the airway or oral cavity. Mouthguards cannot be clear (except for wrestling) and must be of any visible color other than white to allow for easier rule enforcement by officials. Types of mouthguards which comply with NFHS rules and the relative advantages and disadvantages of each are listed below.

**TYPE OF MOUTHGUARD****Mouth-formed****ADVANTAGES**

Inexpensive  
Form-fitted

**DISADVANTAGES**

Deteriorates over time  
May not last entire season  
Pressure on cheeks and gums  
if not fitted well

**Custom**

Accurate fit  
Comfortable  
  
May offer superior  
protection

Most expensive  
Several trips to dentist may be  
required

**Stock**

Easily fits over braces

Poor fit and easily dislodged  
Can disrupt normal breathing and make  
intelligible speech very difficult

**References:**

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