

## **April is National Facial Protection Month**

ROSEMONT, Ill. – Four national healthcare organizations are teaming up in April to promote the use of protective gear – such as mouth guards and helmets – to prevent dental and facial injuries resulting from sports and recreational activities.

Founded by the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS) and with the support and collaboration of the Academy for Sports Dentistry, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Association of Orthodontists, National Facial Protection Month encourages people of all ages to “play it safe” and avoid sports-related injuries to the head and face by wearing safety equipment.

A mouth guard is one effective and relatively inexpensive piece of protective gear that becomes increasingly necessary as children become engaged in contact sports. Athletes are 60 times more likely to suffer harm to their teeth if they are not wearing a mouth guard. According to a 2017 survey conducted by the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), while 99 percent of parents say youth should be required to wear a mouth guard when playing sports, 37 percent admit their child does not wear one.

The annual costs of all injuries, including orofacial injuries, sustained by young athletes have been estimated to be between \$500 million and \$1.8 billion, according to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD). These injuries result in 20 million lost days of school, according to the Academy for Sports Dentistry (ASD).

To avoid the pain and cost of dental and facial injuries, parents, caregivers and coaches are urged to encourage players to follow these tips:

- Mouth guards should be worn in all contact or collision sports, including basketball, baseball, softball, football, hockey, martial arts, soccer, wrestling and volleyball.
- Helmets should always be worn when biking and playing football, softball, baseball, lacrosse and hockey as well as during activities such as skateboarding, riding scooters, horseback riding or other physical activities that pose a risk of concussion. Helmets absorb the energy of an impact.
- Protective eyewear and helmets should be worn per ASTM International, an organization that develops and publishes voluntary consensus standards.

Visit these National Facial Protection Month co-sponsor websites for more information and resources:

- The [Academy for Sports Dentistry](#) – a forum for dentists, doctors, athletic trainers and coaches to improve and protect athletes’ dental and oral health.
- The [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#) – the membership organization representing nearly 11,000 pediatric dentists.
- The [American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons](#) – the membership organization representing more than 9,000 oral and maxillofacial surgeons.
- The [American Association of Orthodontists](#) – the membership organization representing more than 19,000 orthodontists.

## **About National Facial Protection Month**

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

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