

Young athletes urged to use face-protecting gear

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Mouth guards, helmets and face shields can save teeth and more, experts say.

(HealthDay)—Young athletes and their parents and coaches are being reminded of the importance of wearing mouth and face protection during recreational and organized sports.

In 2012, the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation predicted that more than 3 million teeth would be knocked out in youth sporting events that year. The foundation also said that athletes who don't wear mouth guards are 60 times more likely to suffer damage to their teeth.

A survey commissioned by the American Association of Orthodontists found that 67 percent of parents said their children did not wear a mouth guard during organized sports. It also found that most children said they do not wear a mouth guard during organized sports because they are not required to wear them, according to a news release from the [American Dental Association](#).

Mouth guards not only save teeth, they also help protect jaws, according to the Academy for Sports Dentistry, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, the American Association of Orthodontists, and the American Dental Association.

As part of National Facial Protection Month in April, the experts offer the following advice about mouth and face protection for athletes:

- Always wear a mouth guard when playing [contact sports](#). They are much less expensive than the cost to repair an injury.
- Helmets are another important piece of safety equipment. They absorb the energy of an impact and help prevent damage to the head.
- Use protective eyewear. The eyes are very vulnerable to injury when participating in sports.
- A face shield can help prevent damage to the [delicate bones](#) around the eyes, nose and jaw. Objects such as hockey pucks, basketballs and racquetballs can cause severe damage to players of any age.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [sports safety](#).

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