

# MetroParent

M A G A Z I N E

## Mouth guard mandate

Parents spend plenty of money each year on shin guards, wrist guards, athletic cups and other sports gear to protect our young athletes. But one of the most important body parts often remains exposed to traumatic injury: the mouth.

The American Association of Endodontists (AAE) urges coaches and parents to enforce mouth-guard use during sports to help prevent knocked-out teeth.

Mouth guards prevent an estimated 20,000 oral injuries in the United States each year, according to the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association.

While many parents assume that football and ice hockey pose the highest risks for dental trauma, statistics from the *Journal of Pediatric Care* show that soccer players have the greatest risk of such injuries, suffering them at three times the rate of football players, while basketball players have double the risk of football and ice-hockey players.

"It is imperative that all student athletes be fitted for a custom mouth guard by their family dentists before taking the field," said AAE president John S. Olmsted. "Just as helmets help protect an athlete's head from trauma, mouth guards are essential to protect teeth from serious injury."

Of course, even with proper protection, a tooth can still get knocked out. But a tooth that's out isn't necessarily gone for good. With quick and proper action, many teeth can be successfully implanted. To maximize the chance of success, consult an endodontist as soon as possible after the tooth is knocked out. Endodontists are dentists with expertise in treating traumatic tooth injuries. They specialize in root-canal therapy, which often is needed to treat a knocked-out tooth, and can save many teeth that were once considered hopeless. Because they're accustomed to emergencies, endodontists are often flexible in accommodating sudden treatment requests.

When teeth do get knocked out, act quickly, yet calmly, and follow these steps:

1. Handle the tooth carefully by the crown to help minimize injury to the root.
2. If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse it with a spray of water. Do *not* use soap or chemicals, scrub or dry the tooth or wrap it in a tissue or cloth.
3. Reposition the tooth in the socket immediately, if possible.
4. Keep the tooth moist at all times. The tooth must not be left outside the mouth to dry. If it can't be replaced in the socket, put it in a glass of milk or salt water, or in the mouth next to the cheek.
5. See an endodontist within 30 minutes for the best chances to save the tooth.

For more information, you can visit the AAE's Web site at [www.aae.org](http://www.aae.org).