



If you're the parent of a child who plays soccer, football, rugby, or any other close contact sport, and you're worried about their oral health, you're not alone.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of injuries and instances that can damage anyone's oral health during sports, not just children, so being prepared and taking the necessary precautions to ensure that the worst doesn't happen is extremely important.

Tooth Fracture

Having a tooth fracture can happen virtually anywhere, not just in sports. However, it's one of the most common sports injuries that affect oral health. Fracturing a tooth could occur from something as simple as falling down and landing on your jawline, for example.

Depending on how severe the fractured tooth is, it may be able to be fixed by a dentist straight away using restorative materials. However, to properly do this, immediate attention will be needed or else the tooth will continue to fracture and fall out completely, which is very painful.

Tooth Loss

If you've seen a professional hockey player that has had multiple teeth knocked out, chances are it was from taking pucks to the face. [Tooth loss](#) is one of the most common sports injuries that affect oral health where hockey, for example, is concerned. Once a permanent tooth has been knocked out, immediate action is needed. If you can find the tooth you must hold it by the crown and rinse it gently under water, but do not scrub it. Make an emergency appointment with your child's dentist and bring the

tooth with you to the appointment. If the dentist feels that it can be implanted back in, he or she will do so.

However, if you can not immediately go to the dentist and must wait a day or two, keep the tooth in a cup of milk. Do not try to implant it back yourself as you may damage the tooth and the dentist will not be able to put it back. That's when a costly implant will be required to save the bone structure of the jaw.

However, if a couple of hours go by, never mind a couple of days, there is little chance that the tooth can be successfully planted back in. After approximately 30 minutes, the change of this goes down by about 10% every 5 minutes.

Tooth Extrusion

If your child has gotten hit hard enough during sports and complains about pain their mouth, it's possible they have a tooth extrusion. This can happen in any sport played, or even on a daily basis. The trauma caused to the oral region results in a tooth that has not yet erupted fully to partially erupt from the socket and towards the palate.

A non-rigid splint will be required should this occur in order to gently position the tooth properly again so it can erupt the way that it should. Should this occur your child will need to be pulled out of sports for awhile. The monitoring and recovery process is crucial to the life of this tooth and the pulp, so endodontic treatment may be needed.

Damage to the Soft Tissues

If an injury occurs and there is bleeding from the mouth, even if it's only a small amount, have your child wash their mouth out using water and soap as soon as possible. If there are foreign objects or dirt in the mouth ensure that everything comes out and rinse a few more times.

If there is quite a bit of bleeding apply pressure using a wad of paper towel, gauze, a tea towel, whatever you can find on hand. However, if the bleeding does not stop after 10 minutes,

immediately seek medical attention at a hospital or emergency dentist, preferably the latter of the two.

If the gums have become damaged during an injury it's important to see a dentist straight away. If the gum damage is prolonged and made worse through further injury or regular life, such as eating crunchy foods that scrape against it, tooth loss could occur from severe damage.

Splitting of the Lips

This occurs when your child takes a hard fall and does not have enough time to brace themselves. If they hit the ground on their jaw, their teeth will close on their lip more often than not and instantly split the lip. This can also affect the tongue, as well.

There are multiple ways to prevent oral damage through a sports related injury. By taking the proper precautions to ensure that the worst cannot happen, your child can play sports as much as they want. Plus, you as the parent will not have to worry about at least one area becoming damaged.

Wear a Mouth Guard

The most obvious ways to protect your child's oral health from sports injuries would be to have them wear a mouth guard. They are very easy to find and can be bought online or over the counter at your local drugstore. You can usually find them in sports stores, too.

While the inexpensive "boil and bite" ones are preferable and very easy to find, they are not always the best ones to choose. Typically you need to boil it in water for a few minutes and then have your child bite down with a lot of pressure to get the proper indents needed. Although, these don't usually last very long, are uncomfortable, and don't get the proper fit more often than not.

If you're going to [get a mouth guard](#) for your child, you should do so properly. Your dentist can make a proper mouth guard that will be comfortable and fit them well enough.

While it's definitely more expensive than one you'd find outside of

the office, they offer a lot more protection and will not give out. The following bullet points explain how to properly care for your child's mouth guard:

- After it's been used rinse it with cold water and let it air-dry
- If your child uses it on a regular basis, clean it occasionally with mouthwash or mild soapy water
- Store the mouth guard in a protective plastic container, you will get one if it's been crafted by a dentist, to ensure heat and cold cannot damage it
- Tell your child not to chew on it and to ensure that he or she always wears it properly
- Check it regularly to ensure that it's not tearing, cracking, or wearing down
- If the mouth guard no longer fits the way it should or your child's bite has changed, bring it back to the dentist to have a new one made or the original altered

Properly caring for your child's mouth guard will ensure that it will last as long as possible. Keeping it in good shape ensures that your child's mouth will be just as safe, too.

Wear a Helmet

Football and hockey, for example, require helmets to protect not only the skull but the mouth, as well. The need for a helmet is pretty obvious, and acquiring one for your child is relatively easy. Sport stores will carry multiple different types of helmets for each sport. You can go to one and ask about a helmet for your child. Ensure you let the sales representative there know what sport your child plays and any other relevant information. They will fit your child for the helmet that he or she needs.

Teach Them the Rules and the Risks

Nothing prevents sports injuries more than knowing the rules of the game and the risks that come along with them. Teaching your child about what could happen, where injuries are concerned, when playing the game is the best way for them to look out for a potential impact or injury. Injuries during sports often occur because people, both children and adults, get too rough, ignore the rules, and are just in it to win it. In this case, it becomes a very dangerous game and they run the risk of getting hurt.

Steps to Take Further to Protect Their Teeth

If your child goes into a sports game with weak, vulnerable teeth, the worst is going to occur even if they take a fall that isn't a hard one. A lot of children have lost teeth, both premature and permanent, because they are playing sports with poor oral health. Therefore, the safety of their oral **health during sports** starts long before they can get to the field.

Having a Proper Oral Hygiene Routine

Your child should be brushing their teeth at least twice a day, flossing once, and even using mouthwash if they like it. It's not uncommon for your child to be resilient when it comes to brushing their teeth, but you as the parent must ensure that they do so. This is especially important if your kid plays sports.

If your kid does not have proper oral health and only sees the dentist once or twice a year, you're going to be paying multiple, costly dental bills because they have oral issues as a result of sports injuries.