

Mouth Guards

Hello Parents

As a former athlete who played football, 50% of my adolescents and young adulthood required me to have a mouth guard. I am no expert but I think I can help with the ongoing troubles I see with children not wanting to wear a mouth piece in sports.

These guidelines are something I used myself and on my own children and it seemed to work. Hopefully something here will help out and make wearing the guards a much less traumatic experience. If a mouth guard is properly fit your child will not even notice it which makes one less thing to think and worry about. The first time you do this it might take more time than what the instructions state but once you get the hang of it, it will take no time at all.

What mouth guard to get

This may seem obvious but all children especially in IP should have a **YOUTH mouth guard**. Most if not all companies will state on the packaging if it is adult or youth. If for some reason you cannot find the size or they do not have it on the package ask a sales associate. Don't leave it to chance. Getting an adult mouth piece will not fit your child no matter what you do to it.

OK so I have found a youth mouth guard, now what?

There are a few mouth guard companies to choose from and prices range from approx \$14.99 to \$60. Our sponsor, Canadian Tire Kanata carries many types but if you cannot find one there (considering they sponsor 4 associations) Luc at Rink Pro sports in Stittsville carries them also.

I tend to levitate towards the not so expensive mouth guards not because in cheap and don't care about my children but because at this age your child may go more than 1 in a season.

For example: My 7 yr old daughter who is in ringette is losing teeth almost weekly. As I fit her for a mouth guard for conditioning I realized that she has no front teeth. The molding process will not be secure once her teeth come in and it is very hard (not impossible) to remold a guard.

The next step for me is very important. Find a youth mouth guard that looks similar to your child's jaw structure. What this means is if your child has very slender facial feature (as my children do), I look for the guard that is not as wide. Shock Doctor (red package) is a great example of this.

Children with a wider jowl could benefit from either a more rigid guard or a Shock doctor.

I think I got the right one, now what?

Ok the next things you will need is a cup of hot water (kettle boiled is what I like), scissors, and a ½ cup of your child's favorite cold beverage. My kids liked milk and Kool-aid jammers.

You will have to trim the ends to fit your child's mouth. I did this by placing the unmolded guard in my child's mouth until the tips were even with the last molars. I then measured the space from the front of the guard to his front teeth and that gave me the amount I needed to trim. If your child won't let you put the guard in their mouth at this time you can do the same thing by finding the molar on the outside of the cheek. Press down on the guard so the sides are as flat as possible and make a cut. Flattening the sides should make the cut fairly straight. Try to trim any sharp edges.

Once you have trimmed the ends dip the guard in the hot water for **HALF** of what the manufacturer suggests(I believe most say 15 seconds so dip for 7 seconds) After the 7 seconds remove from the water and with your fingers try to smooth out the edges you just cut. You will not have to press hard, just enough to smoothen it similar to the end of the piece you just cut. It doesn't have to be perfect but enough that when you run your finger over the cut part it does not feel like a razor. Trust me if you think it feels like that to your hand imagine what it will be like to your child's mouth.

Once you have the mouth guard to your liking and it has cooled off the next step is to practice with your child **BEFORE** you mold it. Explaining this next step first to the child helps a lot and telling them it's a game is even better. The object of the game is to suck all the juice out while keeping the mouth guard in one spot.

Dip the unmolded mouth guard in the child's favorite drink and place it in the child's mouth. By holding the mouth piece up with his/her tongue (parents you will most likely have to demonstrate by pressing your tongue on your upper teeth). Once the tongue is holding the guard, have the child close their mouth as much as possible and like a straw, try to get all the juice. You should be able to hear them trying to suck the juice from the mouth piece. I told my children they sounded like a chipmunk which got a good laugh. You may have to practice more than once in order for the child to get the concept.

Once you feel your child has mastered this it is time to mold the guard.

Place the guard in the hot kettle water for 15 seconds. You will be able to see the guard start to soften (looks like its melting in the water). After removing from the hot water immediately place the guard in the cool juice for no more than 3 seconds. Place the guard in your child's mouth. Do not let them do it. They more than likely will put it in with the strap not centered which will then make the mouth piece not centered. Like the game you played before, have your child get all the juice out of the mouth guard. Once the juice is out have them open their mouth. If the process worked the mouth guard should stay secure to the upper teeth. If it drops, repeat the process again.

You should notice a huge difference in how your child reacts to a properly fitted mouth piece.

I hope this helps someone and if you have any issues please feel free to contact me.

Enjoy the season!

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