

Benefits Spotlight

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Mouthguards 101: Should Cyclists Wear Them?

Helmet? Check. Water bottle? Check. Bike lock? Check. Mouthguard? Really?

While athletic mouthguards are a no-brainer for contact sports like football or boxing, many cyclists don't consider them essential gear. But ask anyone who's ever fallen off a bike onto the unforgiving pavement, and they'll tell you a mouthguard can save your teeth.

"Mouthguards are highly recommended for many sporting activities," said Dr. Jeffrey Chaffin, Dental Director for Delta Dental of Iowa. "While they're especially important for contact sports, they are also beneficial for cycling."

As Iowa gears up for RAGBRAI, thousands of cycling enthusiasts will flock to the state to pedal from river to river. Whether you're embarking on the state-wide event or simply enjoy an occasional ride, it's important you understand the risks to your mouth and how to protect it.

The facts and tips below will help you decide whether a mouthguard is worth the investment.

Mouthguards don't just protect your teeth.

Mouthguards protect your whole mouth—your teeth, gums, jaw, lips, tongue and the inner part of your cheeks.

Mouthguards may reduce your concussion risk.

Wearing a helmet is the best way to protect your head and brain while riding, but a mouthguard may deliver some added protection. A mouthguard not only shields the structures in your mouth from damage, it also acts as a shock absorber. By reducing the force of trauma on your lower jaw, it may also protect your brain from concussion.

There are three types of mouthguards.

Mouthguards come in three general categories:

1. Ready-made
2. Boil and bite
3. Custom-made (or custom-fabricated)

The ready-made and boil and bite mouthguards are available “over-the-counter” at most sports stores or pharmacies, while custom-made mouthguards are made especially for you.

While Dr. Chaffin said an over-the-counter mouthguard may help protect your teeth, custom mouthguards are a higher quality product.

“Custom mouthguards can be made by your dentist, and they provide the best fit and comfort,” Dr. Chaffin said.

Because custom mouthguards are made for your mouth, they have superior fit and protection compared to ready-made or boil and bite mouthguards. The drawback to custom mouthguards is the price, which may cost hundreds of dollars more than a retail version.

But when you consider the treatment cost for a lost tooth, the custom mouthguard price tag may be worth the investment.

Look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance.

If you’re choosing an over-the-counter mouthguard, look for products that carry the ADA Seal of Acceptance on their packaging. A product with this seal has shown evidence of its safety and effectiveness, so it’s a good choice if you’re seeking a more affordable option.

Mouthguards Protect a Wide-Range of Athletes

Mouthguards aren’t just for boxers and football players: Cyclists can prevent serious dental injuries by using them, too. If you’re unsure which type of mouthguard to choose, talk to your dentist. He or she will discuss the custom options available and may suggest quality over-the-counter products as well.

Whether you’re riding RAGBRAI or cycling a neighborhood trail, a mouthguard may give you the peace of mind and protection to keep you smiling all summer long.

Sources

<https://info.umkc.edu/dentalfacultypractice/sports-and-mouthguards/>

<https://www.dentistry.uiowa.edu/patient-care-faq>

<https://www.ada.org/en/member-center/oral-health-topics/mouthguards>

The Camper’s Guide to Dental Health

A camping trip is a great way to reconnect with nature and let go of the routine of modern life. But there’s one routine you shouldn’t slack on: twice-daily brushing and flossing. Maintain your good oral health in the great outdoors with these four healthy camping tips.

- 1. Be Prepared for Anything**

Pack a few dental items in your first-aid kit, such as cotton, toothache drops and temporary cement for fillings. It’s also a good idea to have your dentist’s phone number handy in case you have a dental health emergency while camping.

2. **Toothbrushing: No Sink or Running Water Required**

Pack a few dental items in your first-aid kit, such as cotton, toothache drops and temporary cement for fillings. It's also a good idea to have your dentist's phone number handy in case you have a dental health emergency while camping.

3. **Say "No" to Marshmallows**

Pack a few dental items in your first-aid kit, such as cotton, toothache drops and temporary cement for fillings. It's also a good idea to have your dentist's phone number handy in case you have a dental health emergency while camping.

4. **Stay Hydrated**

Pack a few dental items in your first-aid kit, such as cotton, toothache drops and temporary cement for fillings. It's also a good idea to have your dentist's phone number handy in case you have a dental health emergency while camping



Take Care of Your Teeth, then Take Care of Nature

At the end of your trip, don't forget to leave your campsite as you found it. Remove all your trash, including floss, single-use toothbrushes and paper cups. You'll feel good knowing you've preserved nature's beauty (and your dental health)!