

### **Some disturbing statistics**

One out of 3 boys and 1 out of 4 girls will experience a dental injury by the time they finish high school.

A hospital study found that almost 10 percent of all dental injuries are sports related. In collision sports such as football, hockey, and boxing, the risk is obvious. And athletes participating in these sports are required to wear protective gear. But in other contact sports such as basketball, baseball, softball, wrestling, soccer, and volleyball, there is not as much awareness of the risks of dental injury and protective mouthgear is not mandatory.

Almost 12 percent of male athletes between the ages of 12 and 18 reported oral injuries. In a survey of 1,020 Florida high school varsity basketball players, 33 percent reported sustaining at least one oral-facial injury during a season. Of all basketball injuries, 34 percent were oral-facial.

### **Using Mouthguards Reduces Injuries**

Before wearing mouthguards became mandatory in football, 50 percent of all injuries in football were oral-facial. After required use of protection, only 3 percent of football injuries are oral-facial. It is estimated that annually more than 200,000 oral-facial injuries are prevented because of the mandatory mouthguard wear in football. Hard tissue trauma of the mouth and lower face was reported to be 60 times more likely for athletes who did not wear mouthguards. Properly fitted mouthguards reduce the rate of concussions and dental and jaw injuries during sports.

### **Athletes Resist**

Voluntary wear of mouthguards is rare. Players frequently object to using mouthguards because of discomfort, difficulty breathing, and difficulty speaking. But inexpensive mouthguards are available that alleviate these objections. Most coaches agree that mouthguards prevent injuries but only 16 percent required mouthguard use in sports other than football.

[These excerpts were published by the R.E. Belt Company which makes one type of non-custom fitting mouthguard]

### **Recommendation**

Our office recommends the "Boil and Bite" type of mouthguard to be used while playing sports with braces on teeth. This type can be moulded to fit around the braces and teeth so that it will remain in place comfortably. It is not tight enough to prevent movement of the teeth due to orthodontic treatment and can be re-moulded as necessary to accommodate the tooth movement that will occur. It is available in most sporting goods stores.

