



## **Play it safe – prevent oral injuries before they happen**

Sports are a great way to keep your child's body healthy and fit, and sometimes injuries and accidents during these activities just can't be avoided. The mouth is one of the most injured places on the body during contact sports and recreational activities. Each year, 3 million to 5 million U.S. children suffer sports injuries severe enough to require emergency room treatment, according to the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation. Using proper protective equipment is the key to preventing these types of injuries.

If your child is playing a sport in which he or she has a risk of injury to his or her mouth, wearing a mouth guard can be the best line of defense. Mouth guards, usually a flexible piece of plastic or other material that covers the upper teeth, protect both the teeth and the soft tissues of the mouth. There are a number of different types of mouth guards and it's best to talk to your dentist about which one is right for your child.

If your child does sustain an injury to his or her mouth or teeth, it's important to get treatment as soon as possible. A knocked-out tooth is a true dental emergency. Follow these steps to help ensure the best possible chance of the tooth being re-implanted.

- First, make sure your child is otherwise all right – no concussion or severe face injury, for example.
- Pick up the tooth by the chewing edge, or crown. Never pick up the tooth by the root, which is the part of the tooth below the gums.
- Rinse off the tooth if it's dirty, but do not scrub or remove any tissue fragments.
- If your child will tolerate it, gently put the tooth back firmly in its spot. If possible, have the child hold it or bite gently on a gauze pad to keep it in place.
- If you can't put the tooth back in its place, store it in a clean container and cover it with milk or saline solution (a teaspoon of salt in a glass of water) to keep it from drying out.

Take your child and the tooth to the dentist as soon as possible, ideally within 30 minutes.

For more information on protecting your child's smile, go to [www.MouthMattersIL.com](http://www.MouthMattersIL.com).