



Ask Dr. Grant



DR GRANT IS A RENOWNED COSMETIC DENTIST, TREATING PATIENTS BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. HE IS THE ONLY COSMETIC DENTIST IN THE REGION GRANTED PRACTISING PRIVILEGES AT NUFFIELD HOSPITAL, EXETER

Sports mouth guards – what's the story?

What are they?

Sports mouth guards or gumshields are moulded vinyl covers that protect and cushion the teeth and soft tissues. They are designed to be worn whilst playing various sports to limit or prevent mouth-related injuries, chipped or broken teeth or even tooth loss. They are suitable for both adults and children.

What types are there?

There are two main types: ones you can buy off the shelf, namely ready-made and boil-and-bite, and ones that are custom made for your own teeth. The off-the-shelf ones are much cheaper but are generally considered to be less effective and many patients complain they don't fit properly, feel uncomfortable or make them gag. Custom-made guards may cost more, but if you consider that if you were to lose a tooth dental implants cost over £2,000 each, it puts things into context.

When should I wear one?

Whenever you play contact sports such as rugby, boxing and martial arts or sports with a stick or bat such as cricket and hockey. So, whenever you risk being hit in the mouth, either by another player, the ball or the stick. You should think of it like any other part of your sports kit and wear it every time you play.

What if I wear braces?

If you have fixed braces, wearing a guard can actually help protect your braces and also the inside of your mouth from the wires cutting in. If you wear removable braces, these should be taken out before putting in your guard.

What happens?

Impressions are taken of your teeth and then a guard is custom made to fit snugly over your teeth. Adjustments can be made to ensure the optimum fit. A guard is usually only worn over the upper teeth, but if you have lower fixed braces your dentist may advise having one for your bottom teeth, too.

Any choices?

There's a huge range of colours and patterns, you can even have one made in your team's colours and/or with a name or logo on. In my experience, being able to choose the design makes people more likely to wear them and look after them.

**“FOR AN
IMPENETRABLE
SHIELD, STAND
INSIDE YOURSELF”
– HENRY DAVID
THOREAU**

What if my mouth changes?

There's no need to buy a new guard for slight changes, the guard can be adjusted or remoulded to allow for new teeth or teeth movement.

How long do they last?

They can last a long time if you look after them – clean after each use and store in the case provided to avoid possible damage. However, just like other sports equipment, they will suffer from wear and tear.

Any downsides?

If not fitted correctly, they can rub, make you gag and interfere with your speech or breathing.

Any final advice?

If you already have a mouth guard, take it with you next time you visit your dentist to make sure it still fits properly.

Costs?

£50 for a plain colour or £75 for patterns plus extra for a name or logo. As ever, go for trust and experience, not simply cost. **DL**

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