



Endodontists urge kids to 'watch their mouths'

March 28, 2008

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - As kids everywhere "spring into sports," the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) is urging all young athletes to "watch their mouths" and wear a mouth guard for every sport, including spring sports typically thought of as "non-contact" sports like soccer, softball, baseball and even gymnastics.

Traumatic injury to the teeth and knocked out teeth are most often associated with football or hockey, but spring sports, such as soccer and baseball, can present just as big a risk, the AAE notes in a statement issued Thursday.

The association points out that soccer players are roughly eight times more likely than football players to suffer mouth injuries and nearly one in five baseball players will experience a dental injury. Mouth guards prevent an estimated 200,000 injuries a year.

"Mouth guards are not just for kids that play rough contact sports," Shepard S. Goldstein, AAE president and an endodontist from Framingham, Massachusetts said. "It is essential that children's teeth be protected from dental injury when they play any physical sport."

"The AAE wants athletes, coaches and parents to know that mouth guard use is imperative for all sports."

There are three types of mouth guards: the off-the-shelf "one-size-fits-all" mouth guard; the mouth-formed "boil-and-bite" mouth guard; and the dentist-made custom mouth guard.

While custom mouth guards offer the best protection, using any type of mouth guard helps to reduce the chance of injury to the teeth, according to the AAE. If a tooth is knocked out, the association suggests taking the following steps to help boost the odds of saving the tooth:

*Pick up the tooth by the chewing surface, not the root.

*If the tooth is dirty, gently rinse with water.

*Reposition the tooth in the socket, if possible.

*Keep the tooth moist.

*See an endodontist within 30 minutes.

When using mouth guards, it's important to properly maintain and clean them to prevent any possible infections.

The AAE's mouth guard campaign is part of a larger initiative - the 2008 Root Canal Awareness Week campaign -- which takes place March 30 to April 5.