



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **April is National Facial Protection Month**

**[Rosemont, IL] The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS) reminds children and adults: As you suit up for outdoor fun this spring, don't forget to take care of your face.** Spring too often brings a flood of patients suffering mouth and facial injuries resulting from sports-related accidents to doctors' offices and even emergency rooms.

### **Helmets help**

Whether you are riding a bicycle, scooter or motorcycle, or playing baseball, soccer or lacrosse, wear a properly fitted helmet. A well-fitted helmet should sit on top your head in a level position, covering the forehead. It should not rock back and forth or side to side. Pay attention to the chinstrap. It should fit around your ear and under your chin comfortably. How well do helmets work? In baseball alone, it is estimated that batting helmets with face guards may prevent or reduce the severity of nearly 4,000 facial injuries.<sup>1</sup>

Remember, a multi-sport helmet can be used for a variety of activities. Contact the [Snell Memorial Foundation](#), 916/331-5073 and the [American National Standards Institute](#), 212/642-4900 for additional information about helmet safety standards.

### **The best defense is a good offense - mouth guards make a difference**

A recent survey of parents by the American Association of Orthodontists found that mouth guard use is low – 33%, even though one of four parents surveyed said their child has sustained an injury during an organized sport that resulted in a trip to the emergency room.\*

Consumer Product Safety Commission statistics echo their findings. The commission's 2006 estimated emergency room-treated injuries for youths under age 15 reveal that the largest percentage of injuries is associated with the head, face, mouth or ears. Leading the pack in sheer numbers are bicycle injuries with 34% of the nearly 240,000 injuries associated with the head and face. Just under half of baseball's 85,000 injuries were associated with these anatomical areas.\*\*

Just by wearing a properly fitted mouth guard, many of these accidents and traumatic facial injuries could be prevented. In fact, the American Dental Association estimates that mouth guards prevent more than 200,000 oral injuries each year.

An effective mouth guard holds teeth in place, resists tearing and allows for normal speech and breathing. Depending on your bite, it should cover either the upper or lower teeth as well as the gums. A range of mouth guards is available, with the most effective-and priciest-being one that

is custom made. But even a \$5 “boil and bite” version from your local drugstore is better than no mouth guard at all.

### **Don't let an oral or facial injury sideline you**

Be smart. Protect yourself and your loved ones from easily preventable oral and facial injuries by always wearing sports safety equipment like helmets and mouth guards. Your dental professionals care about your well-being and urge you to take the appropriate precautions when you head out this spring.

National Facial Protection Month is sponsored annually by the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons ([www.aaoms.org](http://www.aaoms.org)), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry ([www.aapd.org](http://www.aapd.org)), and the American Association of Orthodontists ([www.braces.org](http://www.braces.org)). They encourage children and adults to enjoy the pleasures of the season by using common sense and taking the necessary precautions to prevent sports injuries.

*\* The AAO commissioned Impulse Research Corp. to conduct the AAO 2009 Protective Sports Gear Survey. The survey was conducted in February 2009 online with a random sample of 1,022 men and women, ages 18 years old or older, from the U.S. Survey participants were carefully selected to closely match U.S. population demographics and the respondents are representative of American men and women 18 years old or older who have children between the ages of eight and 17, who participate in organized sports. The overall sampling error rate for this survey is +/- 3 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence.*

*\*\*Consumer Product Safety Commission, Release #08-252, April 23, 2008*

*Saving Faces, Changing Lives — The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), the professional organization representing more than 8,000 oral and maxillofacial surgeons in the United States, supports its fellows' and members' ability to practice their specialty through education, research and advocacy. AAOMS fellows and members comply with rigorous continuing education requirements and submit to periodic office examinations, ensuring the public that all office procedures and personnel meet stringent national standards.*

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