‘NO MOUTHGUARD NO PLAY,’ SAYS AUSTRALIA’S DENTISTS AND SPORTS MEDICINE SPECIALISTS

For the first time two of Australia’s leading health associations, the Australian Dental Association (ADA) and Sports Medicine Australia (SMA), have come together to approve the use of a Mouthguard Policy that all sports clubs can sign up to.

The Mouthguard Policy, which is available from the ADA and SMA websites, clearly outlines how sports clubs can commit to reducing the incidence of dental trauma that can occur from the playing of sport.

Dr Peter Alldritt, Chair of the ADA’s Oral Health Committee, said “Every year thousands of people are treated for dental injuries that could have been avoided by wearing a protective, custom-fitted mouthguard.

“Wearing a custom-fitted mouthguard helps to absorb and spread the impact of a blow to the face, which may otherwise result in an injury to the mouth or jaw.

“Dental injuries can result in time off school or work to recover, can be painful and disfiguring, may involve lengthy and complex dental treatment. The cost of an injury to the teeth or jaw far exceeds the cost of a mouthguard”.

The Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine’s study of junior rugby league players on the Gold Coast in Queensland revealed that:

- Over half (53.8%) reported having experienced an injury to the face or teeth when playing sport;
- 90% of coaches had to deal with these injuries; 41.4% more than five times; and
- In spite of the fact that over 90% of coaches (93.8%) encouraged the wearing of mouthguards, only 68.2% of players did so and mostly during games (not training).

SMA is Australia’s peak advisory body on all medical and health issues for active people at all stages of life, with a focus on prevention of chronic lifestyle diseases. SMA draws together all sports medicine and sports science and population health professionals.

SMA CEO, Nello Marino, said, “We are proud to have worked with the ADA on the Mouthguard Policy. SMA seeks to spread its ‘Safer Sport’ message throughout Australia through the development and design of courses and educational resources for coaches, trainers, teachers and participants. The Mouthguard Policy is another way SMA is encouraging coaches, trainers and sports clubs to tackle the dangers of dental trauma that can occur as part of sport.”

All sports clubs of any stripe are encouraged to sign up to the Mouthguard Policy and require their members to do so as well. While traditional contact sports such as Rugby League, Rugby Union, AFL and boxing are known to have incidences of dental trauma, sports that are seen to be non–contact in nature,

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such as hockey, netball and basketball, actually have many occasions of mouth injuries during the inadvertent contact that occurs.

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