Safety when playing sports

Just like a helmet, a mouth guard is important for many sports.

Why? Mouth guards protect the teeth and jaw. When something hits the mouth, the mouth guard absorbs some of the impact, and because it connects all of the parts of the mouth together, the impact is spread out and causes less harm.

Where do you get a mouth guard? Mouth guards can be purchased at a pharmacy or can be custom-made by your dentist.

When should children wear them? If your child participates in sports, ask your dentist if a mouth guard is recommended and, if so, what kind. Some sports are more risky to the teeth and mouth than others.

"I always considered braces to be just cosmetic. But my daughter's crooked teeth made it hard to keep her teeth clean, which caused cavities. Now that she's out of braces, I understand how braces helped her for the rest of her life."

– Jeff, Clinton, WA

Braces and Orthodontia

Does your child have overcrowded teeth?

Overcrowded teeth can be more difficult to care for and can contribute to tooth decay and gum disease. Orthodontic care (such as braces) can help!

Baby teeth can give clues

Even before permanent teeth start to come in, you and your dentist may see clues that your child will need orthodontic care. Baby teeth are a good indication of how a child's permanent teeth will look. If your child's baby teeth are crowded and crooked, this may tell you that braces will be needed down the road.

Factors that may increase the need for orthodontic care:

- Prolonged thumb or finger sucking
- Over-bite or under-bite
- Improper jaw development
- Significant decay in baby teeth (or removal of baby teeth)
- Overcrowded teeth
- Accidental loss of permanent teeth
- Certain medical problems

With regular dental visits, some of these problems can be addressed early or can be avoided. Be sure to ask your child's doctor or dentist if you have concerns. Don't wait until you think it is time for braces.

When orthodontic care starts

Usually, when your child is around 7 or 8 years old, your dentist will be able to determine whether he or she needs orthodontic care and can begin to take care of problems.