



Wear a mouth guard, or risk serious injury

The Australia Dental Association, Victorian Branch (ADAVB) is anxious to dispel the myths and misinformation that have been communicated to the public since a horrific incident involving Essendon's Dustin Fletcher recently.

Since Fletcher had teeth knocked out during the game, there has been substantial media speculation around the most appropriate preventive and response measures.

The ADAVB was extremely disappointed to see three professional footballers on Channel Nine's 'The Footy Show' admitting that they did not wear mouthguards. The ADAVB's spokesperson, Dr. Neil Hewson, said he was not surprised that one of the players had already lost a front tooth and had to wear a permanent denture to cover his missing tooth.

"This is a very young man, and he is already wearing false teeth. Perhaps if he had worn a mouthguard while playing, he wouldn't have to put up with dentures at the age of 23," Dr Hewson said.

"The comments by the players on The Footy Show were incredibly irresponsible. With the current misinformation shown this week about care following a dental injury, the remark that these footballers don't wear mouthguards because they can't talk or breathe properly is concerning – effectively they have told a generation of young people that tough guys don't need a mouthguard," he added.

The ADAVB wishes to strongly reinforce that mouthguards keep dental injuries to a minimum, particularly in the case of any sport where there is a chance of a knock to the face. Also that professionally fitted mouthguards are comfortable, allow speech and do not restrict breathing.

"Teeth are at risk of injury when playing many sports, and this can result in long and potentially expensive treatment, not to mention compromised health. The ADAVB recommends the use of fitted mouthguards, which can reduce the risk of jaw fractures and also help prevent concussion as the result of a collision. Custom made and professionally fitted mouthguards can be light and comfortable, while also helping resist the impact of a strong blow to the mouth and jaw," Dr Hewson said.

The ADAVB recommends the following steps:

To prevent dental injury

- See your dentist to have a customised mouthguard fitted
- Wear your mouthguard at training and during the game
- Update your mouthguard every 12-18 months, to ensure it is fully effective rather than ill-fitting
- Keep your mouthguard clean, stored in a rigid container and away from heat to ensure it maintains its shape
- Avoid do-it-yourself 'boil and fit' type mouthguards that are unlikely to provide as effective protection

When a tooth is knocked out, you need to

- Remain calm, find the tooth, handling it by the crown only and ensure it is clean. If dirty instruct the patient to gently suck the tooth rinse it in milk or **very briefly** in water
- Replant it in the socket **immediately** (to maximise the chance of effective reimplantation this should ideally not be delayed beyond 30 minutes)
- Have the patient hold the tooth in place
- If you are unable to replant the tooth, keep the tooth moist by submerging it in milk, sealing it in plastic wrap, or placing it in the patient's mouth, next to the cheek, then **SEEK IMMEDIATE DENTAL TREATMENT - TIME IS CRITICAL**

DO NOT

- Hold the tooth by the root surface
- Scrape or rub the root surface
- Let the tooth dry out
- Rinse or store the tooth in water for more than a second or two

For more information about how to prevent dental injuries and care for your teeth please visit www.ada.org.au or for an interview with an ADAVB spokesperson please contact:

Sarah Harvie or Rhys Ryan at Porter Novelli -

Ph: (03) 9289 9555 (B/A)

Mobile: 0402 217 956 OR 0408 527 873

Email: sharvie@porternovelli.com.au OR rryan@porternovelli.com.au