

As of January 1st, 2014 all GAA players must be equipped with mouth-guards when playing as part of the GAA's ongoing efforts to safeguard the welfare of players.

Participation in GAA games will be dependent on players wearing a mouth-guard and match officials have been instructed accordingly.

Mouth-guards must be worn in training as insurance will not cover any claims in which a mouth-guard is not present.

KEY POINTS

- Gaelic footballers in all age grades must wear a mouthguard from January 1st 2014
- It is the responsibility of each individual player to use a mouthguard
- A properly fitted mouthguard is the best available protective device for reducing the incidence and severity of sports-related dental injuries
- Players can be sent-off in a game for not wearing a mouthguard
- Players will not be covered under the GAA player injury scheme if they don't comply with the mouthguard rule
- No Mouthguard? No Game!

ABOUT MOUTHGUARDS

There are three types of mouthguard:

Stock mouthguards are preformed and come ready to wear. They are inexpensive and can generally be purchased in sports shops for in or around €5 each. However, little can be done to adjust their fit, they are bulky, can make breathing and talking difficult, and they provide limited protection. Dentists do not recommend their use, nonetheless, once they carry the CE (European Conformity) mark they are acceptable in terms of complying with the new rules.

Boil and bite mouthguards can also be bought over the counter at most sports shops and generally offer a better fit than stock mouth protectors. The 'boil and bite' mouthguard is made from thermoplastic material. It is placed in hot water to soften, then placed in the mouth and shaped around the teeth using finger and tongue pressure. Dentists do not recommend their use in general. Typically this type of mouthguard will cost in the region of €8 to €33 and again any mouthguard with the CE mark on it in this category is sufficient to ensure compliance with the new rule.

- ***Official OPRO GAA/GPA boil and bite mouthguards are available for purchasing through the following retailers: Supervalu, Centra, Lifestyle Sports, Elverys, O'Neills and Heatons***

Custom-fitted mouthguards are individually designed and made in a dental office or a professional laboratory based on your dentist's instructions. These will not just offer the best protection against dental and oral injury but they should not affect performance i.e. breathing and speech should be relatively unaffected particularly if these have been worn regularly. Firstly, your dentist will make an impression of your teeth and a mouthguard is then moulded over the model using a special material. Due to the use of the special material and because of the extra time and work involved, a custom made mouthguard is more expensive than the other types, but it provides the most comfort and protection.

To find a list of dentists and dental centres in your area, you can use the 'Find a Dentist' function on the Irish Dental Association's website <http://www.dentist.ie/find-a-dentist.10.html>