

LGFA MOUTH GUARD POLICY

From January 1st 2017, it is mandatory for all ladies Gaelic football players in all age grades to wear a mouthguard in all practice sessions and games.

KEY POINTS

- It is the responsibility of each individual player to use a mouthguard.
- Players will be ordered off in a game for not wearing a mouthguard and will remain off the pitch until the situation is ratified.
- Players will not be covered under the Injury Fund if they don't comply with the mouthguard rule.
- No Mouthguard? No Game!

This document has been compiled to assist Clubs, players, parents, coaches and referees in complying with the provisions of the rule.

ABOUT MOUTHGUARDS

There are three types of mouthguards:

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.

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

<https://portal.irishdentalassoc.ie/Find-A-Dentist>

WHICH TYPE OF MOUTHGUARD SHOULD I PURCHASE?

The decision on which type of mouthguard a player should obtain is a matter of personal preference. There is no doubt that custom-fitted mouthguards offer the best fit and protection but they are the most expensive option also. The 'stock' and 'boil and bite' options will suffice for compliance with the rules, but only if the product carries the CE mark.

It is essential that a player feels that his mouthguard is properly fitted. Should a player feel that this is not the case; we would strongly advise that dental practitioners are consulted with.

In terms of underage players, it should be borne in mind that teeth and mouths are still developing up until about 12 years of age and young players may grow out of custom-fitted mouthguards over a period time. However, dental practitioners are ultimately in the best position to give advice to individuals in this context.

HYGIENE ADVICE

- Mouthguards can be rinsed with cold water or with a mouth rinse before and after each use and /or cleaned with toothpaste and a toothbrush
- Occasionally clean the mouthguard in cool, soapy water and rinse it thoroughly
- Place the mouthguard in a firm, perforated container to store or transport it, this permits air circulation and helps to prevent damage
- Protect the mouthguard from high temperatures – such as hot water, hot surfaces, or direct sunlight to minimise distorting its shape
- Occasionally check the mouthguard for general wear, if you find holes or tears in it or if it becomes loose or causes discomfort, replace it
- Bring the mouthguard to each regularly scheduled dental visit to have your dentist exam it

ROLE OF THE REFEREE

If a player refuses to comply with a Referee's instruction to wear a mouthguard, she shall be asked to rectify the situation. Should she refuse to do so the referee shall order her off the field until the situation is rectified.

ROLE OF THE PLAYER

In all Games and Practice Football Sessions, it shall be mandatory for, and the responsibility of, each individual player to use a mouthguard.

ROLE OF THE CLUB

Clubs should ensure that their players, player's parents/guardians, coaches and team mentors are made aware of the mouthguard rules.

ROLE OF THE OFFICIAL GAA COACH IN SCHOOLS

If an official GAA coach is coaching Gaelic football in primary schools, then children must wear a mouthguard to participate in a practice session or game.

PE LESSONS IN SCHOOLS

In terms of PE lessons, the LGFA has no control over what activities or games teachers choose to deliver during PE time. However, we would advise that wearing mouthguards for Gaelic football will significantly reduce the risk of sustaining dental injuries and that it would be prudent for each School to have a policy in this regard.

LGFA INJURY FUND

Players will not be covered under the injury fund if they are not wearing a mouthguard. It is the responsibility of each individual player to use a mouthguard.

LIMITATION OF LEGAL LIABILITY

These Rules shall not impose on any Referee, Linesman, Umpire, Sideline Official, Team Official or Unit any legal duty of care or legal responsibility (which duty shall remain with individual Players, and if relevant, Parents, Guardians or other persons legally responsible for them).

SOME QUESTIONS

1. When did the rule come into effect?

A. From January 1st 2014, players playing in grades up to and including minor were required to wear a mouthguard in LGFA games and practice sessions. This extended to all players from January 2017.

2. What will happen if I am not wearing a mouthguard in a game?

A. If a player refuses to comply with a Referee's instruction to wear a mouthguard, she will initially be asked to rectify the situation by the Referee and if the player continues to refuse, the Referee can order her off until the situation is rectified.

3. Who is responsible for ensuring mouthguards are worn at training or practice sessions?

A. It is the responsibility of each individual player to use a mouthguard. Clubs and players should note that players will not be covered under the Injury Fund if they are not wearing a mouthguard.

4. Do I have to wear a mouthguard whilst playing Second Level games?

A. Yes

5. Do I have to wear a mouthguard whilst playing Third Level games?

A. Yes

6. Do I have to wear a mouthguard if I am an underage player playing on a senior team?

A. Yes

7. Does this apply to International Units?

A. Yes. International Units are subject to the General Rules of the Association.

8. I'm a referee; do I have to check all players' mouths before a game to ensure compliance?

A. Referees will not be expected to individually check players before a game; however, if a referee notices that a player is not wearing a mouthguard, s/he should ask the player to rectify the situation and if the player continues to refuse, the Referee can order her off until the situation is rectified.

9. I currently wear orthodontic braces, what are my options?

A. It has been noted that children wearing orthodontic braces and wishing to play Gaelic football will be particularly concerned about the rule change; however, the LGFA recommends that these players seek advice from a range of dental practitioners on the most appropriate solution for them. The player must request a letter of support from their dental practitioner and keep this with them.