



IRFU

## IRFU Mouthguard Guidelines

### **Background**

Mouthguards or gumshields are typically worn in contact sports to protect the mouth from injury. The purpose of a mouthguard is to distribute the impact of a contact situation evenly throughout the mouth, potentially reducing the chances of injury. Previous studies have indicated that the wearing of mouthguards reduces the incidence of hard and soft oral injuries, jaw fractures and neck injuries (Ranalli, 2000; Knapik et al, 2007; Newsome et al, 2001). A study in New Zealand rugby union has reported a 47% reduction in dental injury claims following the introduction of compulsory wearing of mouthguards (Quarrie et al, 2005).

### **IRFU Guidelines**

From the beginning of pre-season training in the 2015/16 season, the wearing of mouthguards is strongly recommended by the IRFU for players at all levels of the sport during training and games (including leisure rugby i.e. tag and touch rugby).

The IRFU advise clubs and schools to adopt an approach of 'No Mouthguard, No Play'. Should a player have a legitimate medical reason for not being able to wear a mouthguard, this should be communicated and supported by a submission in writing and confirmed by a recognised medical practitioner/dentist to the club or school.

### **Implementation**

#### *Role of the Player*

It is the player's responsibility to ensure that they wear adequate equipment to play the sport under World Rugby's Laws of the Game, Law 4.1 (<http://laws.worldrugby.org/?law=4>). The type of mouthguard a player should wear is a matter of personal preference, however failure to fit a mouthguard properly may reduce the effectiveness of the device. The IRFU advise that all players attend their dentist to get fitted for a player specific mouthguard.

#### *Role of the Club/School/Organisers*

It is the responsibility of the club/school to inform players, parents and officials of this guideline.

### **Find a Dentist:**

Republic of Ireland: <http://www.dentist.ie/find-a-dentist.10.html>.

Northern Ireland: <http://www.bda-findadentist.org.uk/>