

# Facial Trauma

By Brian Beise

## EXPERT ADVICE

### Broken Teeth

“It’s really important for athletes to wear mouthguards to protect their teeth. You can go to a drug store and buy a kit to make them yourself, or you can have your dentist custom-make one for you—these are much more comfortable. A mouthguard will transmit the force to all the teeth so it doesn’t concentrate in one area. A broken tooth won’t heal. If you break it, you’ve got to have it fixed. It’s not like a bone or skin.”



The term “facial trauma” refers to any injury to the mouth, face, or jaw. It’s divided into two categories: soft tissue damage (cuts, scrapes, bruises) and hard tissue damage (bone injuries).

### CUTS, SCRAPES, AND BRUISES

Because the face is the most vulnerable area of the body—and usually the least protected—soft tissue injuries to the face are fairly common. Minor ones can usually be treated on the sideline. Pressure with gauze can help stop bleeding, and ice with elevation can help reduce swelling and bruising.

It’s important to understand that facial injury, more than any other type of injury, may require aesthetic attention during treatment. For example, a soft tissue injury like a cut to the lip may require stitches and the attention of a physician to avoid disfigurement.

### FACIAL FRACTURES

Hard tissue damage refers to breaks in any of the bones that form the face. Facial fractures most often occur from a direct blow to the nasal bone (nose), mandible (lower jaw), maxilla (bone that forms the upper jaw), or zygomatic bones (cheekbones). Hard tissue damage also includes damaged, realigned, or knocked-out teeth.

A hard tissue injury usually requires hospitalization. Many are treated by an oral and maxillofacial surgeon—a surgical specialist of the dental profession who is specifically trained to repair injuries to the face, mouth, and jaw.

### SAVE FACE WITH THE RIGHT GEAR

While protective gear like a plastic face shield is useful during recovery from facial trauma, it is even more important to wear the right gear as a preventative measure. Helmets, mouth guards, and protective eyewear all greatly reduce the chance of severe facial trauma. 😊



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### DID YOU KNOW?

Nasal fractures account for approximately 50% of sports-related fractures.

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