

Hockey Northwestern Ontario (H.N.O.) adopted a position at its' Annual General Meeting in June 2007 for the mandatory use of intra-oral mouth guard protection by all players in the U7 to Junior divisions participating in an H.N.O. sanctioned game or practice.

The mandatory use of a mouth guard product for all players participating in an H.N.O. sanctioned game or practice shall at all times while engaged in play or practices, practice drills or scrimmages on the ice surface wear an intra-oral mouth guard that conforms to the specifications set out by H.N.O. as approved as suitable for use.

Intra-oral mouth guard specifications:

- 1) be of any color;
- 2) not be clear or translucent in colour;
- 3) be of one (1) piece construction;
- 4) be easily sized by the participant or the participant's parents;
- 5) be of an even thickness from the front to the back of the device;
- 6) engage the biting surface of all of the teeth of the upper jaw and the lower jaw;
- 7) maintain alignment of the upper and lower jaw in a neutral position;
- 8) be able to be attached externally to the face mask or shield, or be form fitted or custom fitted to the teeth; and
- 9) will provide not less than **three (3) millimetres** of shock absorbent thickness between the teeth of the upper and lower jaw of a player

#### What The Standard Means

- 1) **Be of any colour** - The mouth guard may be of any colour, this is not an issue for H.N.O.
- 2) **Not be clear or translucent in colour** - An intra-oral mouth guard must be easily seen when the mouth of a player is opened. This is essential in order that on-ice officials can enforce the policy and for emergency medical services personnel to be able to rapidly determine if an injured player has a mouth guard in place.
- 3) **Be of one (1) piece construction** - The finished product must be a single object. Acceptable intra-oral mouth guards may be constructed of laminated materials, however the materials used in the construction of a mouth guard will not delaminate or separate while in normal use.
- 4) **Be easily sized by the participant or the participant's parents/guardians** – The instructions provided by a manufacturer or supplier of intra-oral mouth guards will provide players and parents/guardians with easily understandable instructions on how to size and fit a mouth guard to a player.
- 5) **Be of an even thickness from the front to the back of the device** - The thickness of the mouth guard between the upper and lower teeth shall be consistent from the back to the front of the device.
- 6) **Engage the biting surface of all teeth of the upper jaw and the lower jaw** - An approved mouth guard will come into contact with the biting surface of all of the teeth of both the upper and lower jaw when the mouth guard is properly inserted into the mouth. When fitting a mouth guard, special attention needs to be taken to ensure that to the rear most teeth are in contact with the biting surface of the mouth guard.

- 7) **Maintain alignment of the upper and lower jaw in a neutral position** - A mouth guard will, when fitted, hold the lower jaw in a natural or neutral position in relation to the upper jaw for the individual player. An approved mouth guard will not cause the lower jaw to be forced either forward or backward from its normal position.
- 8) **Be able to be attached externally to the facemask or shield, or be form fitted or custom fitted to the teeth** – The mouth guard must have a means by which it can be attached to the cage or visor that is attached to the player’s helmet. Mouth guards that are “boil and bite” or custom fitted by a dentist, denturist, or dental hygienist do not require an external attachment or lanyard to connect them to the facemask or shield.
- 9) **A mouth guard is considered to be compliant - When there is three (3) millimetres of thickness remaining between the teeth of the upper and lower jaw.** Any mouth guard where the thickness respectively is less than **three (3) millimetres** of thickness between the teeth of the upper and lower jaw is no longer compliant with the **specified** standard. Also, any mouth guard that has been chewed through or has cracks or breaks in its surface is no longer compliant and must be replaced.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1) **What is the implementation date?** All players engaged in play or practices are required to have an approved mouth guard in use on and after June 3, 2007.
- 2) **Is there a list of approved products?** H.N.O. neither endorses nor recommends any particular product or manufacturer. Any intra-oral mouth guard product that meets the stated specifications set out by H.N.O. is acceptable for use. It is essential that Associations, Teams and Leagues and team trainers become familiar with this policy and the specifications of acceptable intra-oral mouth guards.
- 3) **Who is responsible for ensuring that the mouth guard policy is implemented?** The responsibility to ensure implementation involves all coaches, trainers, officials and Association, Team and League Executives. It is also essential that parents/guardians, public safety organizations, medical and injury prevention proponents and agencies become familiar with and lend support to the principle of using mouth guards in the game of hockey.
- 4) **What are the sanctions, who is responsible for implementation?** As an enhancement to Hockey Canada Rule 24(g), in all H.N.O. hockey, the wearing of a mouth guard is mandatory. When a player fails to properly wear a mouth guard on the ice during a game, he shall be assessed a Misconduct Penalty. The offending player is prevented from further participation until such time as an intra-oral mouth guard that conforms to the **specified standards** is in place.
- 5) **Do the “boil and bite” style of mouth guards meet the H.N.O. policy?** Yes, so long as it conforms to the specified standards.

Approved by the Board of Directors: June 8,2013 Replaces: April 26,2013 Reviewed: Triennial
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