



FDI POLICY STATEMENT

Prevention in Sports Dentistry

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2 **CONTEXT**

3 Around the world, more and more people participate in sports for both leisure and as a
4 profession.

5 The development of sports medicine has contributed to healthier athletes and better
6 performance. Sports medicine has also evolved into a multidisciplinary field in which
7 sports dentistry is a key element.

8 Some dental problems, such as non-carious cervical lesions, caries or periodontal
9 diseases, may arise from training, an unfavourable diet in terms of oral health, a
10 parafunctional load or poor oral hygiene. Acidic sports beverages and related products
11 ingested at high frequency in the form of liquids, gels, carbohydrate mouth rinses or food
12 supplements can also cause complications in the oral environment, including damage to
13 dental hard tissues and dental materials, due to their high content of free sugars and
14 acidic ingredients¹.

15 In addition, amateur and elite athletes face a greater risk of oral injuries when they are
16 participating in combat or contact sports without proper protection^{2,3}. Between 10 and
17 61 percent of athletes experience dental trauma during their sports activity and amateur
18 athletes are more prone to suffer from sports-related injuries than elite athletes⁴. Finally,
19 there is a need to increase awareness of the potential impact of dental prescriptions as
20 certain medications may metabolize producing substances prohibited by anti-doping
21 regulations.

22 Oral and general health are connected. The mouth is often considered as a mirror of the
23 body: only a healthy mouth will allow an athlete's body to perform in the most efficient
24 manner⁵. Conversely, an unhealthy mouth can affect quality of life, wellbeing and
25 performance in several significant ways. For example, tooth decay and gum disease can
26 cause or maintain inflammation or infections in the body^{6,7}. Some authorities consider
27 that dental malocclusion may affect posture and gait. This may subsequently impact
28 performance and injury risk, although evidence of these impacts is still limited and further
29 research is needed⁸. A dental emergency before a competition can impair performance
30 or even prevent participation entirely.

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32 **SCOPE**

33 This policy statement aims to provide information to promote the integration of oral care
34 into sports medicine, to stress the importance for all athletes of achieving and maintaining
35 optimal oral health as well as to emphasize the role of dentists in oral health care and
36 prevention.

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38 **DEFINITION**

39 Sports Dentistry: an interest area of dentistry dealing with the promotion of oral health in
40 sports, prevention and treatment of pathologies and injuries of the stomatognathic system
41 related to sports and exercise.

42 Stomatognathic system: The anatomical and functional system comprising the teeth,
43 jaws, associated soft tissues, facial muscles and temporomandibular joint (TMJ).

44

45 **PRINCIPLES**

46 Microbial or functional stomatognathic pathologies are often preventable. Therefore,
47 promoting oral health and good oral hygiene practices in the earliest stages of sports
48 practice (e.g. in school, grassroots clubs and sports academies) is essential.

49 Regular dental or oral health screenings integrated with general health assessments of
50 both elite and amateur athletes, no matter their skill level or classification, are highly
51 valuable as early detection of any oral issue can be fostered.

52

53 **POLICY**

54 FDI has the following recommendations for sports organizations:

- 55 • Communicate the high evidence for the relationship between oral health and
56 general health to all their members, from the most junior to the most senior;
- 57 • Communicate the importance of good oral health in order to maintain athletes'
58 overall health and wellbeing;
- 59 • Encourage school children, amateur and elite athletes to adopt healthy oral
60 hygiene, nutrition, hydration, regular dental check-ups and injury prevention
61 behaviours;
- 62 • Encourage collaboration among sports clubs, federations, institutions and sports
63 medicine centres at local, national, regional and international levels to promote
64 prevention, research, surveillance and monitoring of oral health and related health
65 factors, and to support education in the field of sports and dentistry;
- 66 • Stimulate interactions between their medical staff and dentists by encouraging
67 regular medical and dental check-ups among their members/athletes;
- 68 • Initiate common strategies with national and international sports federations, foster
69 the integration of sports dentistry into sports medicine and incorporate dentists as
70 members of sports medical team.

71

72 FDI recommends that dentists and sports physicians:

- 73 • include questions related to the type of sports their patients are practising and how
74 often in the medical questionnaire
- 75 • inform all athletes, elite or amateur, about the importance of good oral health for
76 optimum performance, about the impact of sports on oral health and about the
77 relationship between oral health and general health;
- 78 • collaborate when managing an athlete's health;
- 79 • include oral health as part of the athlete's general health check-up and ensure they
80 seek appropriate dental care;

- 81 • systematically provide advice on prevention to all athletes, including oral hygiene
82 and preventive measures, benefits of well-balanced diets, knowledge of the acidity
83 of sports drinks and risk to oral health, regular oral health check-ups, good
84 nutrition, appropriate hydration, the use of customized mouthguards when
85 participating in contact or combat sports and the detriments of alcohol, tobacco
86 consumption and;
- 87 • regularly update their knowledge of the metabolism of prescribed medicines and
88 potential interactions that may result in the athlete's non-compliance with the World
89 Anti-Doping Agency regulation.

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91 FDI recommends that all athletes (amateur and elite):

- 92 • wear a custom-made mouthguard when engaging in contact and combat sports,
93 even if only participating in the sport occasionally;
- 94 • understand that poorly fitting mouthguards offer poor protection;
- 95 • avoid consequences of sports activities on their oral health by following specific
96 recommendations of oral health professionals.

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98 **KEYWORDS**

99 Sports dentistry, sports medicine, oral hygiene, oral health, healthy mouth,
100 stomatognathic system, custom-made mouthguard

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102 **DISCLAIMER**

103 The information in this Policy Statement was based on the best scientific evidence
104 available at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities and
105 socio-economic constraints.

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