

## **MOUTHGUARDS AND THE GAA**

The purpose of this document is to present Clubs, Players and Parents with an overview of the forthcoming implementation of the GAA/GPA mouthguard initiative. This is a summary and more in-depth information will be made available in the near future.

It will be mandatory to use a mouthguard in all football matches and training sessions from January 1st 2013 (for all age grades up to and including minor) and at U21 and Adult level from January 1st 2014

There are three types of mouthguards:

**Stock mouthguards** are preformed and come ready to wear. 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 GAA Rules.

**Boil and bite mouthguards** can also be bought over the counter at most Sport Shops and generally offer a better fit than stock mouth protectors. Typically this type of mouthguard will cost in the region of €15 to €20 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 offer the best protection against dental and oral injury. Prices can vary significantly and it is worth seeking and comparing prices from a number of practitioners before deciding to purchase.

There will be a range of official GAA/GPA mouthguards available to purchase in December. Further information on these products will be circulated to Clubs in late November.

## **COMPLYING WITH THE NEW RULE**

If a player refuses to comply with a Referee's instruction to wear a mouthguard, he will initially be cautioned by the Referee and if the player continues to refuse, the Referee can send him off (See Rule 6.2, Rules of Foul Play, The Playing Rules of Football, Official Guide, Part II, 20112)

## **SOME QUESTIONS**

### **When does the new rule come into effect?**

From January 1st 2013, all players playing in grades up to and including Minor will be required to wear a mouthguard in all football games and at practice sessions.

### **When does the ruling come into effect for adult players?**

From January 1st, 2014 all players at all grades will be required to wear a mouthguard in all football games and practice sessions.

### **What will happen if I am not wearing a mouthguard in a game?**

If a player refuses to comply with a Referee's instruction to wear a mouthguard, he/she will initially be cautioned by the Referee and if the player continues to refuse, the Referee can send him/her off.

### **Who is responsible for ensuring mouthguards are worn at training or practice sessions?**

It is a matter for each club to ensure the rule is adhered to at training or practice sessions. Clubs and players should note that players may not be covered under the player injury scheme if they are not wearing a mouthguard.

### **Do players have to wear a mouthguard in hurling games?**

No, the new rule only applies to football; however, wearing a mouthguard when playing hurling does reduce the risk of dental injury.

**I am a minor playing on an adult team in 2013; do I have to wear a mouthguard?**

Not in 2013. The wearing of mouthguards in 2013 is compulsory at all age grades up to minor. However, a player playing at U-21 or adult level in 2013 is not required to wear a mouthguard under rule. From January 1st 2014 all players at all grades must wear a mouthguard.

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

Yes. From January 1st 2013, all Second Level players will be required to wear a mouthguard in all football games and at practice sessions.

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

Not in 2013. From January 1st 2014 all players at all grades must wear a mouthguard.

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

Referee's will not be expected to individually check players before a game; however if a Referee notices that a player is not wearing a mouthguard, he should caution the player and if the player still refuses to wear one, he should be sent off.

**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 & Bite options will suffice for compliance with the new rules, but only if the product carries the CE mark.

**Is there an official GAA/GPA mouthguard?**

There will be a range of official GAA/GPA mouthguards available to purchase in December. Further information on these products will be circulated to Clubs in late November.

*If you have any queries or would like more information, please contact Games & Player Welfare Administrator Ruairí Harvey: Telephone: (0) 1 865 8685; E-mail: ruairi.harvey@gaa.ie*