



NEPSAC

**New England Preparatory
School Athletic Council**

**NEPSAC Sports Medicine Advisory Council (SMAC):
Helmets and Mouthguards in Hockey**
(revised 2023)

History: Prior to the 2017-18 season, NCAA Hockey rules dictated that all players must use mouthguards during participation. The NCAA modified the rule (Proposal #4: Rule 9.5, pg. 20) from "**required**" to wear an internal mouthguard to "**recommended**" to wear an internal mouthguard.

Mouthguards provide protection from direct and indirect impacts resulting in orofacial injuries. A properly fitted, unaltered mouthguard does not affect communication or breathing. Current research does not support the theory that states mouthguards reduce or prevent concussions (NFHS SMAC position statement, 2014).

Similarly, hockey helmet earpieces and j-clips are intended to protect against ear, skull, mouth, and chin injuries. No helmet can guarantee protection against serious injury, however a properly fitted, properly worn, unaltered helmet can help reduce risk or severity of injury. Altering helmets may void manufacturer warranty. For this reason, NEPSAC SMAC requires all hockey helmets and components (e.g., earpieces, j-clips) to remain in an unaltered state and to be in good repair.

NEPSAC Rules:

1. NEPSAC/SMAC **requires** all NEPSAC hockey players to wear a proper fitting internal mouthguard during practices and games despite the NCAA rule change.
2. NEPSAC/SMAC **requires** all NEPSAC hockey players to have helmet earpieces properly secured in their helmet.
2. NEPSAC/SMAC **requires** all NEPSAC hockey players to have j-clips properly secured in their helmet.