

Halloween Hints



Tricky Treats: Hits And Misses For Young Teeth

(NAPS)—As the leaves change to their seasonal shades and jack-o'-lanterns appear on doorsteps, Halloween candy begins to hit supermarket shelves. Fun and festive in color and shape, who can resist? To help when you make your sweets selection, dentists weigh in on healthier options that young teeth will thank you for grabbing.

“Childhood cavities can be the result of too many sugary foods like candy,” said Kyle Dosch, DDS, Delta Dental of Washington’s dental director and member dentist. “The bacteria in the mouth feeds on the simple sugars and processed starches in sweet treats, creating an acid which weakens tooth enamel.”

Diet plays a large role in the health of children’s teeth and gums, and people who consume more sugary foods have a higher risk of developing cavities. With Halloween around the corner, it’s important to watch out for sugar consumption.

According to Forbes, the top Halloween candy in Washington state last year was Tootsie Pops. This year, dentists are recommending adjusting that favorite to options that are better for your smile.

Sweet Treats without the Tricks

When consumed in moderation, these candies are your best bet when you need to supply some sweet treats:

- Dark chocolate has far less sugar than other candies and can be brushed off teeth more easily. Some studies have even found that dark chocolate contains compounds that can help harden tooth enamel and help fight plaque.
- Candy with nuts helps break up the stickiness that can cause cavities to develop. The crunch which nuts add to chocolate bars and other candies can also help break up plaque already on teeth.
- Sugar-free gum, such as Xylitol-flavored, has a natural sugar that fights off cavities and is a great option for a sweet treat that encourages saliva production while being less harmful for your smile.
- Sugar-free lollipops, including Xylitol-flavored suckers, also encourage saliva production while they’re enjoyed and don’t harm teeth the same way hard candies do.

Scary Smile Candies

No candy is a friend to teeth, but these are especially bad cavity culprits. For your next Halloween haul, skip the sticky, sour and hard candies:

- Sticky candies such as taffy, caramel or gummies are difficult to remove from teeth and can damage dental work in the process. A thin layer of the candy can coat the teeth and resist even the most powerful brushing, giving bacteria more time to enact tooth decay.



Helpful hints from dentists can make Halloween a little less scary when it comes to tooth decay.

- Sour candies can erode the enamel on your teeth, permanently impacting their color and natural resistance to tooth decay. As tasty as sour candies are, they can contribute to tooth sensitivity and are high in sugar. To help your saliva neutralize the acids in sour candies when you do choose to indulge, wait 30 minutes before brushing—it will prevent further damage to tooth enamel.
- Hard candies such as lollipops, rock candies and suckers take a long time to dissolve in your mouth and you can run the risk of cracking a tooth. With high sugar content, hard candies provide the bacteria in your mouth with access to highly concentrated sugar levels that can rapidly decay your teeth.

Parent Tips

for Trick-or-Treating Triumph

When your family does partake in Halloween candy, try to savor sweets at mealtimes as dessert. Eating candies with other foods helps wash away sugar and bacteria left behind by candy, especially with some sips of water in between to help wash it down.

“Offer a pre-trick-or-treating snack to your kids before you run out the door,” said Kim Trieu, DDS, a Delta Dental of Washington member dentist, who also teaches at the University of Washington School of Dentistry. “Eating a healthy snack or dinner before candy collecting helps avoid late night candy snacking sessions.”

Rationing the big Halloween haul to one or two pieces of candy per day helps kids see candy as a treat rather than a bottomless buffet. Chocolate candy can even be frozen and kept for six to eight months past the expiration date for candy treats all year long.

Make sure to get a good brush and floss in before bed on Halloween—to help keep the sugar bugs at bay.

Learn More

For more information about your oral health in general, visit Delta Dental of Washington’s blog at www.deltadentalwa.com/blog.