

Chewy and hard Halloween candy are worst offenders for teeth

The Ontario Dental Association said this Halloween shouldn't be a scary time for teeth and gums, as long as the consumption of treats doesn't exclude good dental habits.

"It's unrealistic to think we can keep all treats from our children at Halloween," said Dr. Jack Cottrell, the ODA president.

"In fact, hiding candy from our children, when others have it, may just make them crave it more."

The good news is that some smart dental habits will greatly reduce the impact of candy on teeth and gums.

Keys to Halloween dental care

Dr. Cottrell offers three suggestions to improve your children's dental care during Halloween.

"First, parents can do their part by handing out healthy Halloween snacks."

Second, sort through the treats collected by your own children. And third, encourage good dental habits right after snacking," said Dr. Cottrell.

Common sense and candy

So how can parents tell the good from the bad when filling up the treat bowl?

HEALTH

According to Dr. Cottrell, it's all relative.

"Parents may be surprised to learn that junk food isn't created equal when it comes to their dental impact."

"In fact, many common snacks are worse for your teeth than Halloween chocolates and candies."

Dr. Cottrell says the real trick is avoiding the worst offenders, especially the sticky, chewy hard and crunchy.

"Sticky sweets that adhere to teeth are the prime culprits behind decay-causing bacteria and plaque," said Dr. Cottrell.

"Fruit-flavoured roll-up treats and raisins can stick to teeth more easily than a chocolate bar."

Your Guide To Halloween Snacks

Friendly Treats:

fruit, sugarless gum, potato or tortilla chips, cheese puffs, sunflower seeds, popcorn, sugarless lollipops.

Somewhat Scary Treats:

candies, chocolate bars, regular gum, lollipops.

Frightful Treats:

rock candy, peanut brittle, toffee, caramels, jelly beans, gummy treats.

Good goblin'

When children return from their Halloween rounds, take some time to ensure all the treats pass your safety inspection.

Be on the look-out for

open packages, unwrapped candy or fruit or foods that your children may have an allergy to.

Dr. Cottrell also offered some snacking tips for children with orthodontic appliances, so they aren't excluded from Halloween fun.

"Chewy, sticky or hard sweets aren't recommended for children with dental appliances or braces."

"Retainers should always be removed before snacking to prevent damage."

If children have braces, good oral hygiene is more important than ever to remove the food particles and plaque which can get trapped in tiny spaces between teeth and under wires.

No trick to healthy teeth

There is no real trick to maintaining dental health throughout the Halloween season.

Brushing with a soft-bristled toothbrush and flossing are essential rituals right after snacking, to clear away the sweet and sticky substances which can promote tooth decay.

"Treats are best eaten immediately following meals when there's a better flow of saliva to help wash away foods and to dilute sugar."

"If your child is snacking away from home and can't brush, give them some sugarless gum to help get the saliva flowing."

Following these simple steps will help ensure your children enjoy all the fun of Halloween and maintain a healthy smile long after the treats are gone.

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