

MEDIA RELEASE

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## **MAKE HALLOWEEN LESS SCARY FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH**

*Learn all the tricks to help kids say "Boo!" to tooth decay*

TORONTO – Halloween is one of the most enjoyable days for children; however, all the candy they're exposed to from trick-or-treating can be a nightmare for their oral health.

Eating too much candy greatly increases the risk of tooth decay – bacteria that feed on sugar from candy produce acid which can damage teeth and lead to cavities. In Ontario, tooth decay is the second most common cause of school absenteeism. But the Ontario Dental Association (ODA) has some tips to help parents protect their children's oral health without taking away their enjoyment of Halloween.

"Children should have as much fun as possible on Halloween, including eating the candy they get from trick-or-treating," says Dr. Harry Höediono, ODA President. "The trick for parents is to moderate the intake of sweets and make sure kids stick to their brushing and flossing routine."

When your ghosts and goblins return from trick-or-treating, here are some tips to ensure a healthier Halloween.

- When sorting through their candy, get your child to trade in their bad treats for stickers.
- Eating sweets is fine when done in moderation. Keep candy in a sealed container and establish times when your child can have a treat. Immediately after meals is a good time, as there is a better flow of saliva to help wash away foods and to dilute sugar.
- Brush and floss after snacking. If your child doesn't have access to a toothbrush while at school or a friend's house, give them sugarless gum to help get their saliva flowing.
- Alternate some healthy snacks, such as vegetables, fruits, yogurts and cheeses, with Halloween treats.

It also helps to know which treats are good and not-so-good for your teeth.

- The good: Treats that are sugarless or low in sugar, not hard and easily brushed away after they are eaten. Sugarless gum, peanuts, sunflower seeds, popcorn or sugarless lollipops are good treats to hand out. Chocolate, a Halloween favourite, dissolves in your mouth instead of getting stuck in between your teeth.
- The not-so-good: Treats that remain in the mouth for a long time are the prime culprits behind decay-causing bacteria. Avoid sticky sweets that adhere to teeth, such as caramels, toffees and fruit roll-ups. Hard candies, such as lollipops and jawbreakers, can also cause chipped teeth and may damage dental work.

“Tooth decay is not caused just by eating candy – tooth decay comes from not brushing or flossing regularly and letting food sit on teeth for long periods of time,” says Dr. Höediono. “Establishing good oral health habits early in life can help kids survive almost anything – especially Halloween.”

For more information, visit [www.youroralhealth.ca](http://www.youroralhealth.ca).

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