



## NEWS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

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#### **What Will Your Trick-or-Treater Find When Knocking on the Dentist's Door?**

*Delta Dental Survey Reveals Dentist Halloween Practices*

**JOHNSTON, Iowa (Oct. 10, 2011)** – Have you ever wondered what dentists give out on Halloween? Delta Dental of Iowa knows and wants to give parents a few tips to help their little monsters avoid the oral health hazards of this popular holiday.

According to Delta Dental's [2011 Tricky Treats](#) survey of more than 250 dentists, nearly one out of four dentists said they do not hand out anything on Halloween, while 5 percent attack the holiday head on by handing out toothbrushes.<sup>1</sup> Still, 60 percent indicate that they give out candy. But, significantly, of those who hand out candy, 79 percent choose chocolate, while just 13 percent hand out varieties like hard candy or lollipops. And there's a good reason for this confectionery choice.

Time is of the essence when it comes to teeth and sugar, so not all candy is equally scary. Sugary treats – such as candy and fruit snacks – mix with bacteria in the sticky plaque that constantly forms on teeth to generate acid, which may cause decay. Sweets like chocolate that quickly dissolve in the mouth and can be eaten easily lessen the amount of time sugar stays in contact with teeth. Chewy treats and hard candy are particularly damaging because they spend a prolonged amount of time stuck to teeth and are more difficult for teeth to break down.

“Parents can help their kids fight cavities by decreasing the amount of time sugar comes in contact with their teeth, as well as moderating the amount of candy they consume,” said Dr. Ed Schooley, dental director for Delta Dental of Iowa.

Delta Dental offers these other tricks for dealing with Halloween treats:

- Don't buy Halloween candy too far in advance to avoid the temptation for children (and adults) to get a head start on the splurge.

- Try to ensure children eat a good, hearty meal prior to trick-or-treating, so there will be less temptation to gorge on candy.
- Encourage kids to eat a small amount of candy in one sitting immediately followed by a thorough tooth-brushing or at least a glass of water.
- Promote good oral health care habits year-round to your children by encouraging twice daily brushing with fluoridated toothpaste, flossing and getting regular dental checkups.

To learn more about what dentists give out at Halloween and get their best advice for keeping kids' teeth healthy, visit [www.trickytreats.org](http://www.trickytreats.org). For more information about Delta Dental of Iowa, visit [www.deltadentalia.com](http://www.deltadentalia.com).

*Delta Dental of Iowa is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Iowa invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. Delta Dental of Iowa is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental member companies. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to 56 million people in more than 95,700 employer groups.*

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<sup>1</sup>Delta Dental conducted the 2011 Tricky Treats Halloween survey. Delta Dental network dentists in Iowa and nationally were invited via e-mail to participate in the web-based survey. For results based on the total sample of 253 nationwide, the margin of error is ±6.15 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

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## **Sidebar**

### **Majority of Iowa parents limit amount of Halloween candy kids eat**

Delta Dental of Iowa also surveyed Iowa parents to find out how their families participate in Halloween. And the results are not as bad for Iowa children's teeth as you may imagine.

According to the survey<sup>1</sup>, 67 percent of Iowa parents pass out treats on Halloween. And while most treats aren't good for children's teeth, the majority who participate hand out chocolate (82 percent), which dissolves more quickly in kids' mouths than other popular Halloween treats. Chocolate was followed by sweet candy such as Skittles® or Sweet Tarts® (48 percent). Still, one in four (25 percent) surveyed hand out chewy candy and nearly two in 10 (17 percent) hand out hard candy – both types of candy may result in longer exposure of sugar on teeth.

Seventy-seven percent of Iowans report that their children trick-or-treat. And after all of the candy is collected, the majority of Iowans (86 percent) report that they limit the amount that their children eat, while only 13 percent allow their children to eat Halloween candy whenever they want. The remaining 1 percent donates their children's candy to a buy-back program.

“Iowa parents are on the right track of protecting their children's teeth from the horrors of Halloween,” said Dr. Ed Schooley, dental director for Delta Dental of Iowa. “The holiday provides a great time for parents to remind their kids of the importance of good oral health habits.”

<sup>1</sup>*Morpace Inc. conducted the 2011 Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted by email statewide with 150 primary caregivers of children from birth to age 11. For results based on the total sample of Iowa adults, the margin of error is  $\pm 8$  percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.*