



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Good oral health habits prevent Halloween cavities

Ankeny, IA (Oct. 12, 2009) – On Halloween, what can be as ghastly as a goblin and as spooky as a ghost? The answer is sugar and dental plaque.

As the Halloween candy is being devoured, sugar and dental plaque can linger in the crevices in and between your child's teeth and cause cavities. Monitoring your child's sugar intake and ensuring regular brushing habits to remove plaque will help prevent tooth decay this Halloween and make your child's next visit to the dentist cavity-free.

Sugar has long been identified by oral health experts as a major cause of tooth decay and cavities. If not removed by brushing or some other means, naturally occurring bacteria in the mouth form a colorless, sticky film called plaque. Cavity-causing microorganisms within plaque feed on sugar and turn it into acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel and causes tooth decay.

"Cavities and tooth decay are caused by prolonged exposure to sugar," said Ed Schooley, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Iowa. "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."

Here are a few guidelines to safeguard your little goblin's teeth against decay as they savor their candy loot:

- When buying candy for Halloween, look for "sugarless" treats and those that can be eaten quickly, like miniature candy bars. Sugar-free gum with Xylitol actually helps to avoid tooth decay and promotes good oral health.
- When you get home from trick-or-treating, discard hard or sticky candies like sugared fruit snacks, caramels, popcorn balls or lollipops as they overload the teeth with sugar for long periods of time.
- Encourage your child to eat a small amount in one sitting followed by a glass of

water and thorough tooth brushing. It is not a good idea to allow your child to graze on candy from after school until dinner time as this will increase the amount of time sugar comes in contact with teeth.

“Monitor your children’s candy and sugar consumption year-round to prevent cavities and tooth decay. Even in baby teeth, oral infections can lead to further health problems if they go untreated,” said Schooley.

Regularly encourage good oral health habits with your children, including brushing at least twice a day, flossing and visiting your dentist every six months to ensure the sugary villains don’t stick around on your children’s teeth long after Halloween is over.

For more information on oral health, go to the Delta Dental Web site at 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. The Iowa company is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental plans. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to 54 million people in more than 89,000 employer groups.

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