

Benefits Spotlight

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Send in the Switch Witch! And Four Other Ways to Save Your Teeth this Halloween

Plastic pumpkin candy buckets look harmless enough when they're empty.

But when you see the sweets tumble out of one after your child returns from a 2-hour journey around the neighborhood on Halloween night, that bucket suddenly seems like the bearer of a lot of bad news.

Sugar promotes cavity formation, so Halloween poses a problem for parents who want their children to celebrate the holiday but also want their teeth to survive it. Fortunately, kids can enjoy Halloween candy and still keep their teeth healthy. Here's how parents can help their kids practice healthy habits—even when they have a pumpkin chock-full of sweets within arm's reach.

A Healthy Dinner Is the First Step

Breakfast gets the glory as the most important meal of the day, but don't overlook dinner on Halloween. Skipping dinner sets kids up to binge on candy when they return home from trick-or-treating. Pick up something quick and easy (a ready-made chicken with bagged salad, for example) to keep them nourished and energized to walk through the neighborhood.

Set an Example

If you're concerned about your child gorging on too much candy, do your part by giving your trick-or-treaters tooth-friendly treats. Items like stickers, bubbles, bouncy balls, glow sticks and temporary tattoos celebrate the holiday without harming your spooky visitors' dental health. But if you want to give candy, choose dark chocolate—it has less sugar than most sweets and contains antioxidants.

Saved by the Switch Witch

The Switch Witch can be a lifesaver when it comes to minimizing the candy your kids eat on Halloween night. Here's how it works: A few days before Halloween, introduce your kids to the concept of the Switch Witch and ask what your child might like in exchange for leftover candy. On Halloween night, your child places as much leftover candy as he or she is willing to part with at the end of the bed. In return for the candy, the Switch Witch will bring the child a toy or game. The more candy the child gives to the Switch Witch, the better the toy.

Use the Candy to Do Good

Halloween can be a great opportunity to instill the importance of giving back in your kids. Ask your kids to pick their favorite candy, and you can give away the rest to local homeless shelters or charities. Many dentists also have Halloween candy take-back programs, which send the sweets abroad to military service members.

Make Room in Your Freezer

Moderation is key to good oral and overall health, and your freezer can help you achieve it. If you can't bear throwing or giving away your child's leftover Halloween candy, consider freezing it. Most types of candy, when stored in an airtight container, can last between 6 months to a year in the freezer.

Remember, you don't have to eliminate Halloween candy for the sake of your child's dental health. Use the holiday as a way to teach your child moderation, and you'll find that Halloween is not so scary for teeth after all.

Sources

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Decorative Contact Lenses: Spooky Fun or Scary Consequences?

Decorative contact lenses transform your eyes in a blink—morphing you into a cat, vampire or zombie, or painting your eyes a mesmerizing hue. It's no surprise they're a must-have Halloween costume accessory.

But when used improperly, decorative contact lenses are downright scary. They can cause serious eye health risks, including infection and even vision loss.

Does this mean you can't wear decorative contact lenses? No, but you should know the right way to wear them. Here's how to look spooky and stay safe wearing decorative contact lenses on Halloween—or any day of the year.

But First, What Are Decorative Contact Lenses?

You may have heard decorative contact lenses called colored contacts, cosmetic contacts or Halloween contacts. Regardless of the different names, they all change the look of your eye without actually correcting your vision like a traditional contact lens.

Though they're used for cosmetic purposes only, decorative contact lenses are overseen by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Decorative contacts are considered medical devices, and they can cause harm when used without your doctor's approval.



How to Safely Buy Decorative Contact Lenses

When buying decorative contact lenses, consider this question: ***Would I buy vision-correcting contact lenses this way?*** For example, would you purchase a traditional contact lens without a prescription at a novelty store? Of course not. Decorative contact lenses and traditional, vision-correcting lenses have different purposes, but you should treat them the same.

Safely using decorative contact lenses starts with a visit to your eye care professional.

Your eye doctor will give you an exam to ensure your contacts are fitting properly and protecting your eyes. Your doctor will also prescribe the decorative contact lenses specifically for you.

When you're ready to buy, only purchase contacts from a source that requires a prescription, such as credible online retailers or directly from your eye care clinic. Never buy decorative contact lenses from a novelty store, beauty supply store or online without a prescription.

What's the Risk of Wearing Decorative Contact Lenses Without a Prescription?

Anytime you wear contacts improperly or without a prescription, you put your eyes at risk for the following problems:

- Contacts that scratch the top of your eyeball
- Allergic reactions (itchy, watery eyes)
- Reduced vision and blindness
- Eye infection (pain, redness, discharge, reduced vision)

If you experience any eye problems during or immediately after wearing decorative contact lenses, see your eye doctor immediately. Some problems, like an eye infection, can cause serious and permanent vision damage if left untreated.

Spooky Eyes the Safe Way: More Tips for Wearing Contact Lenses

Perfect your Halloween look while protecting your eyes with these three tips:

1. ***Keep your contact lenses to yourself.*** Only wear contact lenses that were made for you, and don't share them with others. Swapping contact lenses increases your risk for eye infection.
2. ***Keep your contacts clean.*** Decorative contact lenses require the same standards of cleanliness as vision-correcting lenses. Ask your doctor how to clean and sterilize your lenses before and between uses.
3. ***It bears repeating: Never buy decorative contacts without a prescription.*** It's not safe to buy contacts without a prescription. Always purchase from vendors who verify your prescription with your eye clinic—never buy contacts from someone who doesn't ask for your prescription.

With a trip to your eye doctor and a decorative contact lens prescription, you can achieve ultimate cat eyes—while protecting your real ones—this Halloween.

Sources

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