

CREEPY CANDY: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Halloween has always been one of my favorite days of the year, and it fills me with nostalgia for my youth.

Dentists and hygienists often cringe at the thought of buckets full of candy being gathered and gobbled every Halloween, but I want to help you to protect your kids teeth, while still allowing them to enjoy some Halloween fun. Personally, I'm a big fan of chocolate-covered nuts.

The GOOD:

- Nuts and seeds (e.g. pumpkin, sunflower, pecans, walnuts, macademia) are great treat options – these are full of healthy essential fats and minerals.
- Sugarless gum or sugarless candy, especially if they use natural non-sugar sweeteners like Xylitol, Stevia or Erythritol.
**Warning: don't let your pets eat any Xylitol-containing foods, as it can make them sick.
- Chocolate (especially dark chocolate) is a fairly healthy choice, and causes minimal damage to your teeth because it dissolves quickly, and doesn't linger on tooth surfaces.
- Fruits, although delicious, juicy and full of important vitamins, contain plenty of sugar and are still considered "nature's candy". So, treat fruits like a healthy treat. Be careful not to eat too many overly-sweet fruits, such as bananas and pineapples, without brushing your teeth afterwards. For more detailed explanation of how fruits can affect your health, I recommend reading my "FRUITS - Nature's Candy" articles.

The BAD: Hard sugary candies, such as lollipops and jawbreakers, dissolve slowly - so they cause cavities by prolonged sugar-coating the teeth. If crunched, instead of sucked, they may chip teeth and fillings.

The UGLY: Super-sticky sweets like toffee, caramels, raisins, gummy candies and fruit roll-ups stick on and between teeth and cause decay. Sour gummies/candies are highly acidic, and will cause acid erosion (dissolving) of tooth enamel over time.

The best "treat time" is at the end of a meal, so that the healthy saliva created while eating will help protect your child's teeth. Eating teeth-cleaning foods like vegetables and hard cheeses can certainly help. Another great idea is to chew some sugarless gum (with Xylitol preferably) after each big meal, to help clean the teeth.



Remember that any sugary candy should be treated as a treat. I urge you to be mindful of how much sugar you consume, especially in forms that linger on teeth for prolonged periods of time, such as sticky or liquid forms (e.g. soda pop, juices, sports drinks). Sugar-filled foods not only create problems for everyone's oral health, but whole body health too – drastically increasing the risk of health conditions like obesity and diabetes, along with all of the problems that accompany them.

Happy Halloween from all of us at ConfiDental! Stay safe and be smart.



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