

Making Halloween Safe for Your Child

With Halloween comes Trick or Treat time and lots of candies for your children. When your child comes home every parent immediately goes through the bag to look for tampered goodies that may harm their child. Did you know there are hidden dangers in the bag that a parent will never see? The ingestion of sugar is one of the main causes of tooth decay. As part of National Dental Hygiene Month, the California Dental Hygienists' Association is offering some tips for parents and children about how to help decrease the dental decay.

More children suffer from dental decay than from asthma. In fact, according to the American Dental Hygienists' Association dental decay (cavities) is the most chronic disease of childhood and affects 50% of children by middle childhood, and 70% by late adolescence.

Fortunately, most dental decay can be prevented, and registered dental hygienists are a valuable resource to promote, establish and maintain good oral health in infants, children, adolescents, and adults. They study and specialize in good oral healthcare, and nutrition, specifically on how and which foods we consume can cause dental decay.

The question now is how and what should my child do with the bag of Halloween candy?

The foods that contain carbohydrates are pasta, bread, rice, chips, fruit, milk as well as the candy, cake, cookies these foods feed the bacteria in plaque, which is on our teeth. They create an acid, which slowly eats away the enamel or outer surface of our teeth and creates a hole.

- The more often you eat carbohydrate foods, especially between meals, the more opportunity acids have to attack teeth.
- Sucking on hard candy or slowly sipping a sweetened drink or soda bathes teeth with plaque acids and continues for 20 to 40 minutes after finishing.
- Go easy on the between meals snacks, try to eat the snack at one time, rather than over a long period of time.
- Mothers sit the child down and let them eat the amount of candy they want four candy bars will do the same damage as one.
- What counts are the number of times the teeth are exposed to sweets and how long it is in the mouth.
- Once teeth have been exposed to sugar it is important to brush your teeth to neutralize the acid effect of the sugar.
- Brushing with fluoride toothpaste helps to re-mineralize the areas of the tooth broken down by the acid created from the sugar and plaque in a person's mouth. Nightly, over the counter fluoride rinses help prevent the formation of cavities too.

Parents: remember these handy tips and ask your dental hygienist, or go to www.cdha.org, to learn about the other things you can do to prevent tooth decay the number one chronic disease in children.