



## NEWS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

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#### **Good oral health habits prevent Halloween cavities**

**Oak Brook, Ill. (Oct. XX, 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 Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. "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."

According to the American Heart Association, women shouldn't eat more than six teaspoons of sugar a day, about the amount of sugar in a candy bar, and men shouldn't consume more than nine teaspoons a day. But on average, Americans consume 22.2 teaspoons of sugar each day.

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

- When buying candy for Halloween, look for treats that can be eaten quickly, like miniature candy bars.

- 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 Anderson.

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.

The not-for-profit Delta Dental Plans Association ([www.deltadental.com](http://www.deltadental.com)) based in Oak Brook, Ill., is the leading national network of 39 independent dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to more than 54 million Americans in more than 89,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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