



# NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **BEWARE THE MOUTH MONSTERS THIS HALLOWEEN!**

**Sterling, Colo – October 20, 2020:** October is the time for crisp chilly mornings, falling leaves, costumes and Halloween! But a child's dream of piles of candy can be a parent's worst nightmare for their teeth. And because October is also National Dental Hygiene Month, trick-or-treating is a perfect time to be watching out for Mouth Monsters looking to cause tooth decay. Cava-Teena, Dracteria, Plaxus, Gum Denise and Ginger-Vitus are lurking in every bag and bucket just looking for little mouths filled with sugar. However, Halloween doesn't have to be a battle of the snacks! It can be both fun and a perfect time to teach children good, lifelong oral health habits, without depriving them of their goodies. Here are some ideas to add to your favorite ghostly gatherings to frighten away those Mouth Monsters waiting to pounce.

### **Sort the Hoard and Beware the Mouth Monsters' Favorite Treats!**

After a night of candy collecting, the first thing kids love to do is dump out their stash and start sorting. This year, before they get started, remember that not all sweet treats affect teeth in the same way and there are some the Mouth Monsters like better. Denying kids their favorite treat may lead to unhealthy eating when they are older. Therefore, even those candies to be avoided as a regular snack, should be allowed in moderation. Once

the kids have sorted their treats by favorites, separating by these categories will help them have a good understanding of what foods invite an attack from the Mouth Monsters:

**Avoid** – Candies that Mouth Monsters love include chewy, sticky candies such as gummies and caramels that stick to the grooves in teeth and should be eaten sparingly. Attaching to teeth makes it hard for saliva to wash away, leading to tooth decay. Additionally, sour candies have a high acidity content that can break down tooth enamel and are also susceptible to a Mouth Monster invasion.

**Better** – Better choices include snack-size milk chocolate and packets of pretzels or crackers. But even these can invite the Mouth Monsters if eaten over long periods of time, because good dental health depends less on what is eaten and more on how often it is eaten.

**Best** – Ideally, to keep the Mouth Monsters away entirely, the best options for a sweet treat include sugar-free gum and dark chocolate. Dark chocolate contains antioxidants that can inhibit bacteria from sticking to teeth, preventing both gum disease and tooth decay.

### **Let Them Indulge – a Little.**

I know this may sound contradictory to everything you have been told, but rationing candy over months is more damaging, from a dental health standpoint, than to indulge for a few days and then placing the bucket somewhere to be forgotten, in fact, it will likely lead to less candy being consumed overall. The problem lies in eating sugary treats over an extended amount of time. This is actually more harmful to your teeth than a one-time binge. Bacteria in our mouths break down the sugar into acid that weakens tooth enamel, the constant exposure to acid results in a higher risk of cavities.

Obviously, a stomachache on Halloween is never a good idea, but allowing your little

Ghoulies a tiny candy indulgence that night may fend off an incessant attack from the Mouth Monsters for months to come.

### **H2O Straightaway Keeps the Monsters at Bay!**

Drinking water discourages Mouth Monsters from latching onto those tiny teeth while consuming foods with high sugar and starch content. So it's a great idea to wash down all that chocolaty goodness with a big bottle of H2O. Swishing it around in your mouth will further help dislodge particles that can get stuck.

An alternative way to increase saliva flow, wash out foods from between teeth and neutralize acid produced by bacteria that causes cavities, is to chew a sugar-free gum for 20 minutes. Sugar-free gum made with xylitol also promotes the growth of a tooth-protective, non-acidic bacteria which can make it difficult for bad bacteria and plaque to form.

### **Be Sure to Brush!**

As expected, the best lesson to teach your children, and stop the Mouth Monsters, is to floss and brush after consuming all that Halloween candy. A normal and frequent dental routine creates a "tooth smart" habit for years ahead. Overexposure to fluoride can be a concern with these extra brushing sessions if your very young child does not spit out the toothpaste, but if in doubt have them brush with just water or a fluoride-free toothpaste. Make brushing fun so they don't resist brushing. One idea is to have them pick out a new Halloween toothbrush so they are excited about brushing! Another important aspect of encouraging kids to maintain their normal dental routine is by scheduling regular dental checkups to examine and clean their teeth.

### **What to do with the rest?**

Once kids have gotten their fill, you will be astonished how quickly they forget about the rest. Pick a place to store your child's candy that is out of reach to prevent

overconsumption and/or late night snacking or freeze it for a surprise treat in a few months. An even better idea would be to donate or find a Halloween candy giveback program.

### **Think Outside the Candy Box!**

For those of us planning to hand out treats, think before you spend your money on that bag of cavity inviting, Monster Mouth bait. There are all sorts of other non-food, inexpensive, cavity free treats such as stickers, quarters, bubbles, pencils, glow sticks or silly putty.

Halloween is a fun and exciting time for kids, and can be for parents as well. You and your kids can enjoy the added goodies that come with the festivities without inviting the Mouth Monsters. It is just a matter of being safe, thoughtful and consuming in moderation. For more information about oral health, visit our website at <https://www.nchd.org/oralhealth> and happy Halloween everyone!

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